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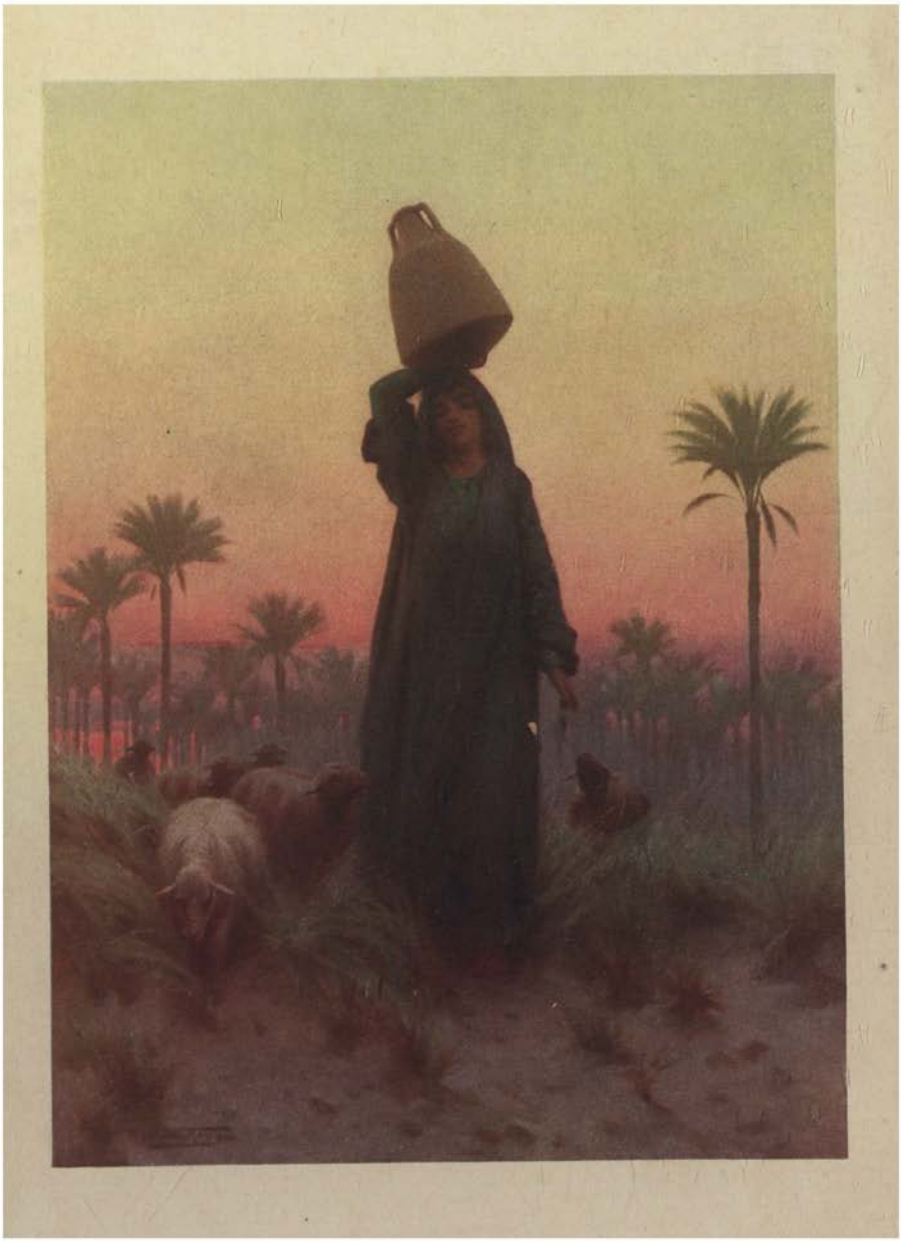

A DAUGHTER OF MIZRAIM

EGYPT

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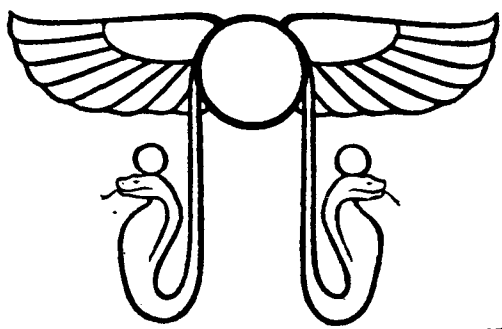

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TO MY WIFE

Author's Note

In response to the expressed wish of many friends, I have ventured to present in book form some of the impressions and experiences derived from a somewhat lengthened residence in Egypt.

In doing so, I make no attempt to produce a work of any critical value, my aim being rather to give a broadly pictorial representation of the life and scenery of the country, and particularly those phases of each which lie off the beaten track. Nor do I pretend to fully illustrate my text or describe my illustrations; but my hope is, that each, amplifying the other, may convey to the reader a little of the fascination of the country, and perhaps excite some feeling of sympathetic interest in a people I have learned to like so well.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity of expressing my grateful thanks to my many friends in Egypt, who, by facilities offered and information given, have so materially assisted me in gaining such knowledge of the country as I possess. My thanks are also

heartily rendered to the proprietors of *Black and White* and *The Century Magazine* for their kind permission to repeat matter already published by them, and also to the many owners of my work, who have so generously allowed the reproduction of pictures in their possession —a courteous and kindly co-operation without which it would have been almost impossible to complete this volume.

R. T. K.

LIVERPOOL, *October* 1902.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

"LISHRUB el moyeh en Nil awadeh," "Who drinks Nile water must return." So says an old Egyptian proverb, the truth of which has certainly been exemplified in my own case; for after many years of residence, I find myself still enamoured of a country which may with some truth be called the world's wonderland.

It is not of course within the power of every one to repeat his visit, but probably few of the many thousands who annually "drink Nile water" are without the *desire* at least of again experiencing its subtle and elusive charm.

From the earliest days Egypt has been a centre of historical and political interest, and to a large extent has been the nursery of the world's art and civilisation; but whether the attracting cause be the glamour of its romantic history, or the physical enjoyment of its climate, generation after generation of travellers is irresistibly drawn to it, and all, from Herodotus to

the "personally conducted" tourist of to-day, have come under the spell of its influence. Its historical interest is apparent to all, and the archæological fascination which holds the "digger" is easily understood; but to the generality of visitors on pleasure bent these factors do not appeal, yet each year sees ever-increasing thousands flocking to the Nile Valley, some to make their first enthusiastic excursions, others to renew acquaintance with scenes already familiar.

Generally speaking, all, whatever their temperaments or mental endowments may be, are alike charmed, though appealed to in different ways.

Putting aside all questions of scientific research, with which indeed I am not competent to deal, it is not easy to determine wherein lies the power of attraction which Egypt undoubtedly possesses. Analyse the country and you find little of inherent beauty to greatly distinguish it from others. Its life is picturesque and its relics are of absorbing interest, but other countries can provide richer and more varied scenes, and yet do not compare with Egypt in world-wide popularity. A narrow strip of alluvial mud closely hemmed in by high deserts constitutes the land, through which, placidly and uneventfully, flows a chocolate-coloured stream. On a grey day how dull and depressing it all is! but glorified by its wonderful sunlight Egypt sparkles with colour, while the very opacity of the muddy river serves more perfectly to repeat the coloured beauty it reflects.

The squalid mud-villages and poorly clad "fella-

hīn" would excite pity in a colder clime, but here the transfiguring effect of sunshine softens every fact and beautifies what would otherwise be repellent. The atmosphere also is peculiarly soft and luminous, clear to a remarkable degree, yet bathing distances in a mellow warmth which takes away any sense of hardness. To its sunshine and air, more than to anything else, is due perhaps that subtle and mysterious charm which all who have ever been to Egypt unconsciously feel.

Another factor in the case is, I think, the element of surprise. Most people go out with a preconceived idea of what they are going to see, and find something entirely different. Egypt is not the conventional East, or what is generally accepted as Oriental. It is peculiar and individual. Sand and rocks abound, but in place of the brazen sky convention demands, its vault is azure, sparkling, clear. Instead of the expected sun-browned vegetation, was ever green so vivid and transparent as the "bercime"[1] fields and growing corn of the Delta?

The people too, though clothed in Eastern garb, are not of one type or mould, but are good-humoured, hard-working *individuals*, with many of whom the traveller will in time become acquainted. Nor has the landscape anything stereotyped about it, but varies infinitely in character according to place or season. The very towns and buildings are not quite what had been expected, and even the Nile trip and the

[1] A kind of clover.

exploration of the monuments is one process of gradual disillusionment.

So then the visitor is constantly experiencing a series of new impressions, which, though contrary to anticipations, are more satisfying and real. He is discovering Egypt for *himself*, and treasures the knowledge gained by charming experience.

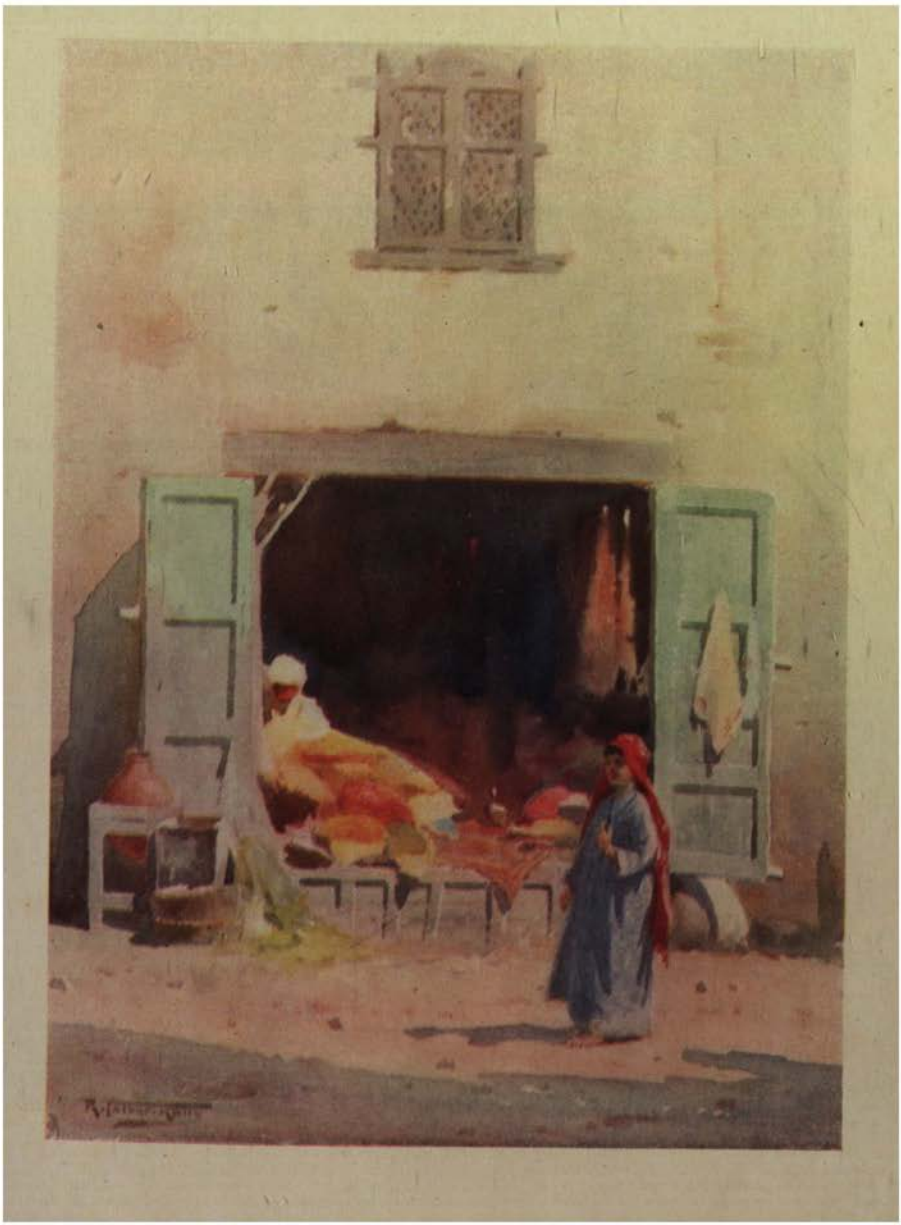
To its sunlit atmosphere, therefore, and this sense of fresh discovery, may be attributed much of the glamour that invests Egypt with a magnetic attraction which draws all men thither, and renders the country a mine of inexhaustible pictorial wealth.

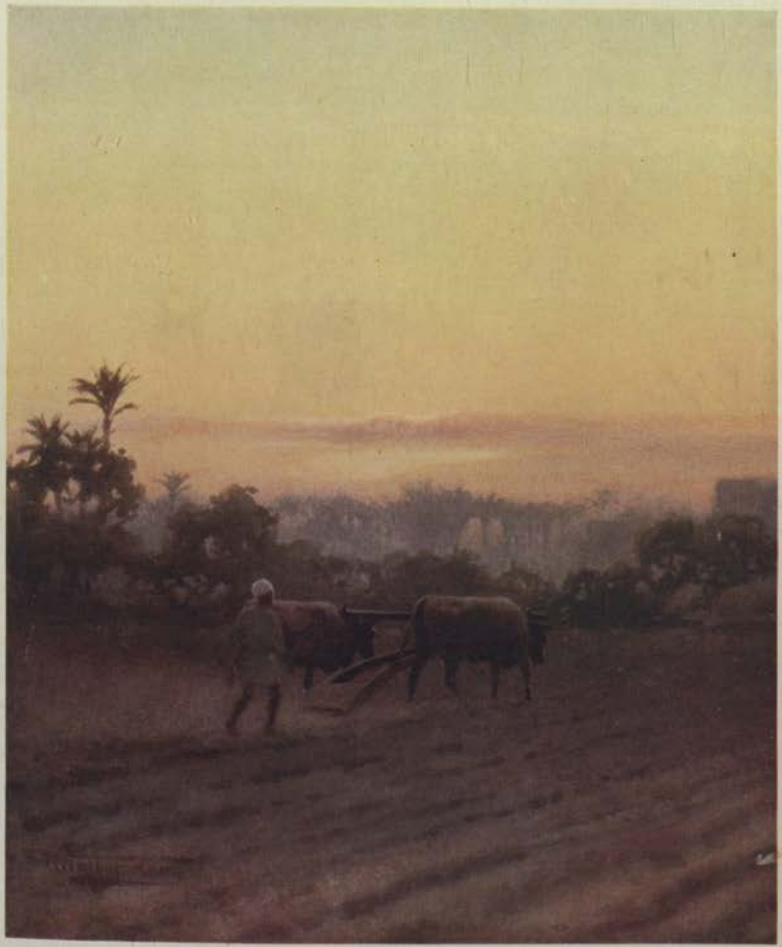
Speaking broadly, Egypt may be divided into three separate spheres: the Nile, the Delta, and the Desert. The first is the happy touring-ground of all, and it may seem almost an act of supererogation to attempt any description of scenes so well known as Cairo and the Nile Valley; and yet even here may be discovered some new fact or fresh point of view which may interest. The two latter, however, are practically unknown subjects to the generality of visitors, and present a native life and local characteristics which differ essentially from each other, as well as from the well-worn tourist track.

The primitive simplicity of the "fellahīn" in the Delta has a charm not to be found among the inhabitants of the large towns, while it is only in the Desert itself that Arab life may be met with; and it will be the object of this volume, so far as may be, to reflect what has for so many years struck me as characteristic and

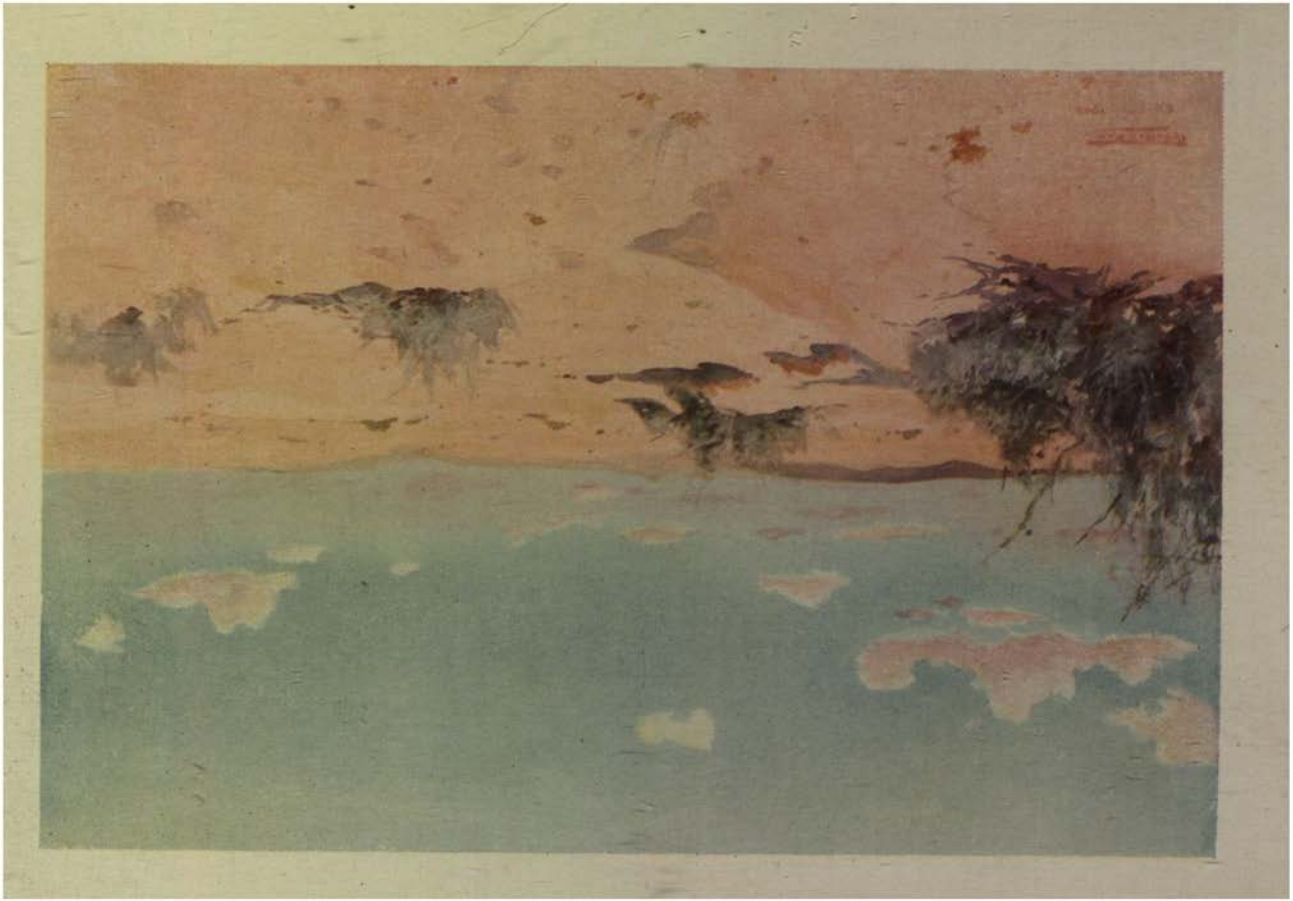
A DESERT STUDY AT TEL-EL-KEBIR

A CAIRO SHOP





THE SAIS MOSQUE, CAIRO



picturesque in each class of life, and endeavour to convey some impression of the varied landscape the country affords.

My first introduction to Egypt was in 1883, and was ushered in in rather a startling manner. We were still two or three hours' steaming distance before land could possibly be in sight, when suddenly we saw, inverted in the sky, a perfect miragic reproduction of Alexandria, in which Pharos Light, Ras-el-Tin Palace, and other prominent features were easily distinguishable. The illusion continued for a considerable time, and eventually as suddenly disappeared, when, an hour or two later, the *real* city slowly appeared above the horizon! A good augury, surely, of the wonders I hoped to discover on landing!

Though the journey from Alexandria to Cairo is more convenient, it is desirable in some ways to land at Port Said. The railway journey is no doubt longer, but its tedium is relieved by a greater variety of scene than I have experienced on any journey of the same length. Even Port Said is not devoid of pictures, and as an example of engineering skill and commercial enterprise the Canal is always interesting. The periodic *gares*, with their red-tiled roofs peeping from among the surrounding foliage, look pretty in the sunlight; while the hybrid population thronging the stations, and an occasional coastguard patrolling the Canal on camel-back, enable you to realise the fact that you have left the New World behind and are on the threshold of the East.

To the right of the line thousands of pelican, heron, wild duck, and ibis enliven the mud-flats and shallows which form the eastern end of Lake Menzala; on the other, looking towards Sinai, you will see an almost constant recurrence of mirage, its semblance of water reflecting little islets being most perfect, and it is difficult for the new-comer to realise that this is illusion and not fact.

The real interest of the journey begins, however, when, on leaving Ismailia, the line turns westward across the desert. Here is something new, and to the appreciative mind how vast and suggestive the desert's "sad illimitable waste" appears!

And yet how exhilarating is this first introduction to virgin desert! The air is fresh and sparkling as the sea-breeze brings with it woolly clumps of fresh-tinted clouds, whose velvety shadows chase each other across the desert's undulations. The fawn-coloured sand shines against the relatively dark sky beyond; patches of glittering salt and coloured pebbles give variety to both tint and texture; the dry water-courses are fringed by the grey-green "mit minan" bush and brighter-hued hyssop, while tufts of growth of various kinds scattered over its surface give a chromatic scale to distances which seem immeasurable. Here and there a sharper note of colour is struck by some wandering Arab silhouetted against the sky, or a shepherd leading his multi-coloured flock in search of such scant pasturage as the desert affords. This district is called the Wady Tumilat, or "valley of the hills," and has a varied

ON THE ISMAILIA CANAL, NEAR TEL-EL-KEBIR

interest of its own. Alongside the line is the Ismailia Canal, refreshing among so much sand, and on its smooth surface glide graceful lateen-sailed boats. Beyond it to the south are the marshes of Nefisha, partly cultivated, and enlivened by little clumps of palm-trees and scattered farms. Behind, glowing in the light, are the ruddy-tinted Suez Mountains, which stretch across the desert until they meet the Mokattam Hills at Cairo. To the north, unbroken desert stretches until it merges into the now barren and desolate "Field of Zoan" of Abrahamic days.

No one can pass through this short bit of desert without picturing to himself the old Biblical days and the wanderings of the Israelites. One's thoughts are, however, soon recalled to the present by the arrival of the train at Kassassin, the forerunner of Tel-el-Kebir and the modern history of Egypt.

About a mile from the station, and just before the train begins to slow down, the whole extent of Arabi's entrenchments can be seen on the right, the railway line actually passing through the bastion placed to guard his extreme right flank. The battle-field is well worth a visit; forts and trenches are still practically perfect, and twenty years of wind and weather have done little to destroy these relics of the famous fight. I visited Tel a few months ago, and was much struck by this. Even the marks of gun wheels and limbers, and the hoof-strokes of their plunging teams, are clearly defined in the hard, pebbly surface. Specific movements of the guns may be traced, and one can almost hear the

command "Action right" or "Limber up," as the case may be. Shrapnel shell and rusty canteen-tins still litter the surface, but perhaps most remarkable of all are the circular ridges which mark the position of the bell-tents of Arabi's headquarter camp.

Suddenly, as the journey proceeds, you realise that you have left the desert and are surrounded by green fields and foliage. This is the Land of Goshen, which we will revisit later; and how beautiful it looks as in quick succession village and "esbeh,"[1] palm-grove and corn-fields, succeed each other as the train rushes on! How fresh is the green of the fields, and with what seeming elation do the palms and bananas stretch out their arms in the grateful sun!

The various phases of agricultural life present themselves in turn. Here is a "fellah" with his yoke of oxen and wooden plough, or "fass"[2] in hand he is making runnels for the water supplied by the primitive water-wheel turned by a blindfolded buffalo, while graceful girls tend cattle in the field or fetch water from the wells. We will know all these people better presently. Speed will only now permit of a quick impression of Biblical picturesqueness and simplicity.

Canals abound everywhere, and boats' sails constantly appear among the growing crops, and frequently on their banks you will notice circular spaces enclosed by low mud-walls and carpeted with straw. These are holy places where the faithful pray amidst their work.

[1] Farm buildings.

[2] A kind of hoe.

The vegetable life of these canals is pretty, and you recognise many familiar plants, while others are strange. Kingfishers and wagtails are numerous, and among the irrigated fields the "paddy bird" gleams white against the black soil. Songbirds there are none in Egypt, and, with the exception of the hoopoo and kingfisher, few can boast any special beauty of plumage; but in the distant lowing of cattle, the drone of honey-bees, and the lively chirrup of the grasshopper, the stillness is pleasantly broken, and you hardly notice the absence of song.

The whole effect of this pastoral panorama is one of quiet industry and mellow content, in which the noisy railway strikes the only note of discord.

As a contrast to this bucolic peacefulness, the way-side stations furnish subjects of a different kind. The platforms are crowded by natives, some travelling, but mostly idlers, for the passing of the mail is an event. Here is the portly "Sheykh-el-Belad"[1] exchanging "salaams" with the conductor; good-humoured fellahīn of varied physiognomies peer curiously in at your carriage window and boisterously comment upon the strange habits and customs of the travelling "Nasrani."[2] Standing partly aloof are a couple of Bedawīn, too proud to mingle with the noisy "fellah," though probably sympathising with their witticisms at the expense of the unbeliever. Little girls crying "moyeh"[3] perambulate the platform ministering to the needs of the thirsty; and among the native travellers

[1] Village sheykh. [2] Christian. [3] Water.

hawkers drive a brisk trade in eggs, dates, sugar-cane, and bread.

Presently cries of "Irkub"[1] send passengers to their seats, and, to the accompaniment of bell-ringing, horn-blowing, and waving flag, you continue your journey, eventually reaching Cairo, tired, but delighted, and having had a glimpse at least of two of the most characteristic features of Egyptian landscape with its attendant incident.

[1] Ride.

AN IRRIGATED FIELD

CHAPTER II

CAIRO

FEW people carry away any very definite first impression of Cairo. Its life is so varied and its interests are so diverse that the new-comer hardly knows upon what to focus his attention. East and West continually jostle each other in streets where strange types and costumes vie with unfamiliar and picturesque architectural features in their claim for notice. Everywhere is a sparkling movement which can only be likened to an ever-changing series of kaleidoscopic views whose colour-pictures bewilder while they delight the eye.

Cairo may be roughly divided into two distinct and widely differing parts—the one consisting of the Esbekiyeh, Ismailia, and Kasr-el-Dūbara quarters, built for, and almost entirely occupied by Europeans; and the other, the purely native town, whose streets and bazaars, mosques and palaces, have remained practically unchanged for centuries.

The European quarters, though in many ways handsome, are too much like some fashionable Continental town to be altogether picturesque, though some of the

older Italian streets are not without interest. All are beautified by avenues of "lebbek"[1] trees, and an occasional *rond point*, with its small ornamental garden and plashing fountain.

All the best hotels are here, and, except for the passing camel-train and ubiquitous donkey-boy, which lend it a touch of local colour, this part of Cairo has little interest other than is to be found in well-dressed Paris or London.

I cannot help regretting the old flannel-shirt and knickerbocker days of the early 'eighties, when good families lived in Sharia Esbekiyeh and the Fagalla, and residents were not above riding donkeys and dining in a public café. Those days were comfortable and picturesque, and I cannot help thinking more *healthy;* and very excellent dinners were formerly provided by these *brasseries.*

Probably one of the first impressions the new-comer receives is the *al-fresco* nature of the life of the place, and the casual manner in which the numerous cafés of the Esbekiyeh quarter are permitted to overspread the footwalks with their little tables and chairs, in some cases compelling pedestrians to walk in the road, at the risk of being run over by some recklessly driven "arrabiyeh."[2] They are interesting, however, with their groups of swarthy Italians, Greeks, and Levantines, arguing or love-making, some lazily smoking the bubbling "sheesha,"[3] others playing "tric-trac"[4] for the price of a coffee or vermouth.

[1] Sometimes called the Nile acacia. [2] Carriage. [3] Water-pipe. [4] Backgammon.

It is a cosmopolitan assembly, where almost every European language is spoken, as the following will show. Two gentlemen of my acquaintance were strolling round the Esbekiyeh Gardens, and presently seated themselves close to some young men engaged in conversation. Being old Cairenes, and between them acquainted with twelve different languages, they were immediately struck by the fact that the youths were speaking in a tongue neither of them had ever heard before. What it could be they could not imagine, and finally, curiosity prevailing, one of them accosted the strangers, and in polite French explained their perplexity, and begged for enlightenment. "Oh," said one of them in reply, "we are talking *Welsh!*"

Here, then, is one of the difficulties which immediately confront the Englishman, who is seldom a good linguist. For the full enjoyment of Cairo a little French and rather more than a smattering of Arabic are essential, and the latter, at any rate, is not easily acquired. Consequently the tourist is at the mercy of his dragoman for any information, and misses those snatches of "chaff" and repartee among the natives which often add so much to the day's amusement. With commendable energy travellers frequently, and after much labour, learn a few Arabic phrases, usually *questions*, forgetting that they cannot possibly understand the replies. Let me recommend them to confine their earlier efforts to the acquisition of such sentences only as give absolute instructions to servants, drivers, etc., and to which no response is required.

French is now little spoken, except in the best shops or at social functions, and few visitors will find much occasion to speak Italian or the other languages in daily use. English, however, is becoming more and more spoken by the natives. Few of the dealers in bazaars frequented by Europeans but can converse in English, and most of the donkey-boys of Cairo talk it freely.

If you want really to see Orientalism in Cairo, the best plan is to pick up an intelligent donkey-boy and comfortable animal, and explore for yourself without your Baedeker or dragoman.

Donkey-riding is healthy and exhilarating, and enables you to traverse the narrowest streets and lanes; while your donkey-boy is quite a good fellow as a rule, and enlivens your ride by imparting all kinds of superfluous information, some of which may be true, but all of it generally entertaining. I prefer him to the dragoman, also, because he usually knows Cairo better; and once the principal mosques, etc., have been visited, the real pleasure of your stay consists in an unfettered exploration of the thousand odd corners of the native quarters.

Here every step reveals a new picture. Little shops, protected from the sun by ragged awnings, display goods and commodities of the most varied description, among which, alas! you will notice a goodly proportion of Manchester prints.

Here is a barber's shop with its fly-net drawn across the door. The fruiterer arrays his brightly

coloured stock upon still brighter papers, a vivid contrast to the adjoining charcoal-store or gloomy shoeing-forge. Gay saddlery, the glitter of the coppersmiths' display, and the ever-lively native café, combine with the life of the street in forming pictures calculated to drive the artist to despair. How busy and how interesting it all is! Notice that Ethiopian whose purple-black skin gleams plum-like from below the snowy turban, or this tall Nubian whose bronze-like features shine in the sun from amidst their setting of ivory whites and blue. The closely veiled women in sombre "miliyeh" or "hubbara"[1] give added value to the gaudy clothing of the little girls; and how delightful is the gamin's ragged "gelabieh,"[2] faded into a hundred variations of its original hue!

Through this motley hurrying throng the stately camel, heavily laden with "bercime,"[3] silently picks his way, and with warning cries the donkey-boy or "carro"[4] driver seeks to clear a path through the crowd. The cries of the drivers are incessant, each passenger being separately addressed, according to rank or occupation. Thus: "Make room, O my mother!" "O Sheykh, take care!" "You, good fellow, to your right!" "By your favour, effendim!" and so on; and here lies a pitfall for those but slightly acquainted with Arabic. "Ya meenuk!" (To your right), "She maluk!" (To your left), are masculine, but have feminine forms also, and are often used without the added proper

[1] The grey or black outer cloak worn by women in the streets.
[2] Blue cotton gown worn by the lower classes. [3] Clover. [4] Cart.

name. So "Ya meen*uk!*" directs a man to move to his right, while "Ya meen*ik!*" applies to a woman, and the cry "Ya meenuk wa she malik!" warns a man and woman in front of you to step to their right and left respectively, so that you may pass between them. Should you, as in the excitement of the moment is quite probable, *invert* the genders, both will step inwards and render a collision inevitable; from which it will be seen that a little knowledge of Arabic is dangerous, and that donkey-riding through the streets has many excitements.

Such then are some first impressions of the native streets of Cairo, above whose struggling mass of humanity rise the mansions of a bygone day with the mellowness of a thousand years upon them.

As the first sense of strangeness wears off and familiarity increases, you are able to further particularise and distinguish between the various types and occupations.

Here let me correct a general error which speaks of all natives as "Arabs." In reality there are very few Arabs to be found in Cairo, and those met with are usually "Magrabin," or Tunisians, who have come in to trade their camel- and goat-hair fabrics. The "Bedawīn" are seldom to be seen, most of the Eastern caravans being composed of Syrian or Persian traders.

Each trade or nationality used to frequent some particular khan, or caravansary, whose lower story provided shops and stalls for the display of goods, the upper room being the living apartments of the travellers.

There are a great many of these khans in Cairo, particularly in the Bab-en-Nasr and Bab-esh-Sharieh quarters, and they were usually named after the founder, as in Khan-el-Khalily (Khalil's Inn), or took their name from the particular trade affected, as in Sûk-ez-zêt (Oil Bazaar), etc. In many cases these khans have good architectural features. Most of them, however, are falling into decay, steamboats and railways having to a large extent destroyed the caravan trade they were built to accommodate.

Cairo is a dusty place, and one of the most important of street trades is that of the water-carriers, and of these there are several grades. First the "sakka," who dispenses unfiltered water from his goat-skin—a most laborious trade, as the pay is small and a skin of water weighs very heavily. Formerly the "sakka" was obliged to go to the river, perhaps a mile or more away, for his supply; but to-day stand-pipes in the street relieve him of this extra labour.

Frequently the shopkeepers in a street will jointly employ one or more of these water-carriers to continually sprinkle the streets and fill the "zeers"[1] of those whose trade requires such a supply. Their "sprinkling," however, is of a vigorous and thorough nature, and I was once, while painting in the street, completely saturated, and my picture swamped. Very vexing, no doubt; but when the poor man fell on his knees, and clasping mine implored forgiveness, I could not find it in my heart to be angry, and so dismissed

[1] Large vessels of porous clay used as filters.

him with "Maalaish" (It does not matter). Fervently blessing me, he cried, "Another would have beaten me, but you are a good man and have mercy"; and then, going down the street, he called upon all to "praise Allah that here was a righteous man who has pity upon the afflicted!" This was many years ago, but I am still remembered in that street, and am spoken of as "ragul tamam," or "an upright man."

Other grades of water-carriers are the "khamali," who, carrying his earthen jar upon his back, very dexterously pours the filtered water over his shoulder into the little brass cups he carries; then the "sussi," whose terra-cotta pot contains liquorice-water, or a drink made from prune-juice; and lastly the "sherbutli," or seller of lemonade and sherbet. The latter is really a fine picturesque figure, partially enveloped in a bright red apron and carrying in a sling a huge glass bottle, the spout of silvered copper being surmounted by a "cradle" containing a large piece of ice. The greenish lemonade, in which float half lemons, seen through the light-coloured glass looks very refreshing; and, with the eye of an artist, it is his custom to have his drinking-bowls of china coloured with bright blue.

Here then are the grades of water-carriers, and it would be as well to distinguish between them, if you would avoid the mistake of an old gentleman who, hot and tired with "bazaaring," called a "sussi" and made him understand by signs that he wanted the contents of his jar poured over his head. After some hesitation the "sussi" did so, deluging him with the

A BAZAAR

sticky decoction, and necessitating the subsequent application of more than one skinful of water ere the old gentleman's locks were restored to a presentable condition.

You will also notice the bread-sellers—men and women who, with basket or barrow, hawk their flat loaves of unleavened bread about the street, and another superior grade carrying a basket with sticks rising from its brim, upon which are threaded little circular cakes of sweetened bread; while dates, eggs, vegetables, sugar-cane, and other edibles are always to be bought in the streets.

Another curious street trade is that of the incense-burner, who with brass brazier swinging fumigates your shop or clothing for the fraction of a penny; and it must be confessed that some corners into which you will penetrate are so evil-smelling as to render his good offices very desirable.

Wherein the smell originates it is hard to say, but there is a peculiar odour, common to all Eastern towns, whose quiet intensity pervades everything, and it is a literal fact that I have smelt Cairo three miles away! Still, bad odours notwithstanding, these narrow tortuous streets are very fascinating; every turn presents a picture, and the very dirt has a charm.

Wandering about the streets is tiring, but it is the only way in which the *real* Cairo can be understood. Oriental life cannot be properly appreciated under the guidance of a dragoman who hurries you from place to place, ignoring the living history so carelessly

passed by *en route*. It must be lived in quietly and *absorbed*. Never mind books; walk about by yourself and see what you can discover for yourself, and enjoy *that*. In doing so you will find many quaint bits, and see much of a life whose every incident is worth your attention. And may I warn the reader against *abusing* the native? It is seldom necessary, and it is surely much pleasanter for every one if you bear in mind that they are human beings and capable of feeling. Kindness goes far with them, and many difficulties may be overcome by good-humour which would not succumb to blows. Even the beggar in the street, with his piteous "Raboona khalik ya hawaga ana maskīn" (God prosper you, gentleman; I am afflicted), may be quietly and without ill-feeling dismissed by the single expression, "Al Allah" (I commit you to God).

Taken in the right way, you will find that on the whole the Cairene is pleasant and courteous, and your rambles will frequently be agreeably interrupted by a pressing invitation to drink coffee in one of the shops you are passing. The coffee is always good, and with the soothing influence of the added cigarette is often a grateful rest from your sight-seeing. The difficulty of language will again suggest itself, but on these occasions conversation is not essential; a polite "salaam" and smile of appreciation is quite sufficient to meet the case.

You will notice in your wanderings variously coloured doorways, their surrounding whitewash being gaily ornamented with conventional designs in red, blue, and yellow. These lead to the "hammam," or bath, and

AN ARAB CAFÉ, CAIRO

there are others in whose decorations appear archaic representations of men and beasts, railways and steamboats. Here resides a "hadj," whose pilgrimage to Mecca is considered sufficient dispensation from the Prophet's prohibition, which forbids the picturing of any form of animal life; and custom allows this record of his journey. Colour forms a very important item in their decoration, and I think the Egyptian displays a wonderful instinctive knowledge of harmony. The various coloured habiliments of man or woman are never out of keeping or in any way incongruous, and often you will see blue and green or pink and red together without jarring. But then the tone of each is just and the proportions are accurate. Similarly, in the painting and dressing of the shops great art is displayed, and I particularly call to mind one shop which was evidently and intentionally a scheme in *red*. The wooden shutters were painted that particularly vivid though rich red you get to know so well in Cairo, the inside walls a lighter shade of the same, while the owner's salmon-coloured "khaftan" and crimson sash and slippers stood out in relief against the ruddy brassware he offered for sale. I may also mention another point which has struck me, and that is the value of black in their arrangements. Take a saddle with its cloths and tassels: the pommel is always maroon or crimson leather, and over the saddle is a cloth or saddle-bag of varied pattern and colour, but generally light in key; but the whole is given a grip and character by the fact that the tassels are black, and it is this little point of

strength that makes the scheme. Similarly, in their costumes black figures largely, and enhances the value of the brighter garments the "arbiyeh"[1] partially conceals. In fact, the general range of colour in the streets is black, white, and blue, among which little glints of red, yellow, purple, or green shine like jewels in the sun.

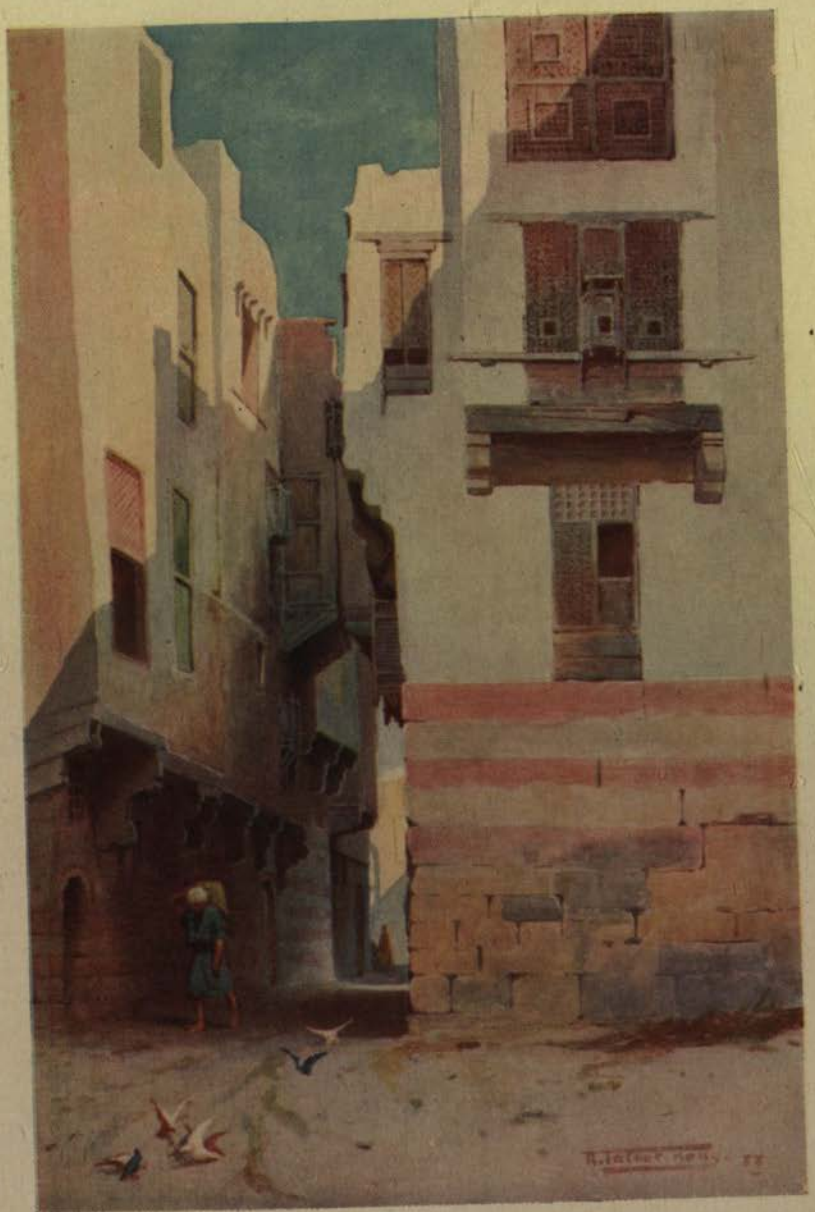
In addition to the human attraction of the streets, domestic architecture is interesting. The ground floor usually consists of shops, and above are the jutting upper stories. The supporting corbels are often richly carved, and many of the large arched doorways of the houses are richly moulded and embellished in a manner suggestive of the most ornate period of Norman work. The entablatures are frequently enriched by perforated stone windows decorated with that intricate geometrical design so peculiar to Saracenic art.

The wooden doors themselves are often richly panelled, and display large knockers of bronze inlaid with silver. Wrought-iron or bronze grills protect many lower windows, and the upper stories are rendered remarkable by the projecting balcony and windows of "mashrubiyeh" work.

Originally these were simply small cages of lattice-work slightly projecting, in which were placed the jars of drinking-water, in order that the breeze and evaporation might cool them. The name is derived from "sherub" (drink), and "mashrubiyeh" simply means the "place of drink."

[1] A loose black overall worn by the men.

A STREET IN BŪLAK



As buildings increased in size and architectural embellishment, these lattices gradually became enlarged and decorated, first by the notching of the laths, but eventually developed into the roomy balconies of fine trellis-work which are such a feature of Cairo street architecture, and from behind which the ladies of the harīm could, unobserved, enjoy the air and see all that occurred in the street below them. Most of these windows have still the little projecting niche which forms the mashrubiyeh proper.

Unfortunately, this work lends itself so readily to the making of screens and ornamental furniture, that the demands of dealers and tourists have practically stripped Cairo of one of its most characteristic features, and, owing to danger of spreading fire, the Government will no longer allow it to be reinserted. Many streets, such as Sharia Gamamīs, Bab-el-Wazīr, and the Sūgarieh, which were a few years ago the richest in Cairo, have now practically *no* example left of this interesting and beautiful work, and year after year witnesses the slow but certain disappearance of other equally characteristic features.

Modern necessity must inevitably clash with mediæval quaintness, and to-day the historic streets of the early Moslems resound to the clanging bells of electric cars. The picturesque Bab-esh-Sharieh, one of the eastern gates of Cairo, has been demolished to allow of road improvements; and many streets, such as the Muski, have during the last few years lost much of their Eastern character.

In the Muski, the "caboot" or wooden roof which formerly spanned the street has been removed, and the small but attractive native shops, with their old-world superstructure, have to a great extent been replaced by large plate-glass windows and modern fronts. The street has been practically rebuilt, and the Muski of the long ago is no more.

Even the dog-scavengers of former times have given place to the "Cairo Sanitary Transport Co." of to-day; and though no doubt the latter is a vast improvement upon the earlier primitive state of things, its advent marked the disappearance of another picturesque feature of Cairo street life.

I well remember how by day these dogs would lie about the streets lazily blinking and sleeping in the sun, too indolent often to eat the scraps thrown to them, and not infrequently being run over and killed by passing vehicles. At night, however, they formed dangerous packs of hunters, and I have more than once been chased by them. Each pack had its own particular quarter, and was never known to cross into that of another, and the fiercest onslaught would suddenly cease when this imaginary line of demarcation was reached. In the town they are a thing of the past, but they still live in the warrens beyond Fostat and the Gibel Achmar[1] at Abbasiyeh.

A native official of my acquaintance had a very unpleasant experience of them some years ago. We were both dining at Zeitūn, and while I returned

[1] Red Mountain.

to Cairo by train, H—— Effendi elected to walk. Mistaking his way in the dark, he found himself among the rocks which formed the habitation of the expelled pariahs. An immediate attack was the result, and the unfortunate gentleman was obliged to scramble up the rocks and keep his enemies at bay by rolling stones and débris upon them ; with each check he made his way to the next ridge, where he would again be attacked and forced to adopt the same plan of defence.

In this way the night was passed, until about three in the morning he found himself, bootless, torn, and half unconscious, upon the Tūra line some miles on the other side of Cairo. Presently the first early morning quarry-train appeared, taking stone to Abbasiyeh, and H—— Effendi called upon the driver for assistance. The driver, however, startled and alarmed, exclaimed, "You must be either a devil or a murderer to be here at this time," and with the assistance of the stoker bound him hand and foot, and threw him among the coals in the tender. On reaching Abbasiyeh he was locked up in the lamp-room to await the arrival of the station-master, upon whose appearance the zealous railway-men recounted the adventure, and, throwing open the door, brought out the supposed malefactor. Their discomfiture may be imagined when, recognising in him a high Government official, the station-master with obsequious "salaams" hastened to offer his apologies, and commiserated with "his excellency" upon the indignity and discomfort he had suffered.

Though in my opinion the Cairene has many traits which command respect, it is inevitable that here, as in all great centres of population, immorality and crime should exist. I am afraid that association with Europeans has had a somewhat demoralising influence, and the former single-mindedness of the Mohammedan has to some extent succumbed to Western indulgence, while the large introduction of Europeans of the lowest class into the life of the cities has had the effect of destroying much that is good in their religion, while at the same time introducing nearly every European vice. Yet, notwithstanding this, there is hardly a street in Cairo where the traveller may not pass unmolested, a statement that could certainly not be made of our lowest slums at home.

It seems to me a crying shame that Cairo should be so overrun with low-class wine-bars, whose tenants are not required to have any licence, or apparently submit to any control whatever, and where wines and spirits of the vilest and most inflammatory nature are retailed. Surely something in the nature of supervision might be attempted; for it is a most regrettable fact that when once the Mohammedan violates his religion by indulging in strong drink, he almost invariably becomes a sot, even if the regular consumption of absinthe and brandy, to which he becomes a slave, does not make of him a criminal or a lunatic.

Another consequence of Western association may be noticed in the gradual modification of costume. A few years ago all natives, of whatever rank, wore

SHARIA BAB-EL-WAZIR, CAIRO

the flowing garments and turbans of their station. Latterly there has been an almost universal abandonment of their distinctive and picturesque garb by the younger generation of the well-born, who now dress in the same manner as European gentlemen. This perhaps is natural and not to be surprised at when such intimate social relationships exist between the high-class Egyptian and ourselves. What is, however, to be regretted is the hideous mixture of native "gelabieh" or "khaftan" with the cast-off tweeds of the tourist. Even the consular "cavass" sometimes appears with a European overcoat worn above his distinctive and handsome Syrian dress. It looks ridiculous, simply, and dragomans, guides, and domestic servants are one and all adopting the same habit. I was engaging a servant some time ago, and was perhaps a little influenced in my selection by the generally artistic appearance of one who wore the complete costume of his class. Imagine my disgust when Hassan appeared next day in a tweed suit and absurd patent-leather boots! Of course I sent him away to change, and told him if he ever dared to appear before me again in such attire I would dismiss him instantly.

Whatever the males may attempt in the way of novelty in dress, the womenkind at any rate are conservative, and never appear in the streets in any but the costume ancient custom demands.

These dresses are distinctive according to the position of the wearer. Ladies of the upper classes when out of

doors wear above their other garments the "hubarah," or large shawl of black silk, which envelops the whole person, and, falling in picturesque folds about the figure, has a graceful effect. The face, all but the eyes, is covered with a veil of white muslin which almost reaches the feet, which again are shod with dainty shoes of morocco-leather. The eyes and eyebrows are heavily shaded with "kohl," which certainly enhances the brilliance of this most beautiful feature of the Egyptian women. Unmarried ladies will be clad in much the same way, though in their case the "hubarah" is frequently white.

Women of the middle and lower classes instead of the expensive "hubarah" substitute the "milayeh," a similar garment made of cotton, dyed a grey-blue and edged with a broad indigo border. The veil, called "burko-u-arusa" (or bridal veil), instead of being of muslin, is made of a kind of coarse crape, ornamented at the edge with embroidery or gold beads, while over the nose is worn a curious ornament of brass or gold, which is the distinctive mark of the married state. Unmarried girls of the lower classes seldom veil, and Coptic women, and those living in the country, frequently dispense with it altogether. Though plainly if not sombrely clad, to all outward appearance, the indoor costumes of the women are always gay, and, according to their means, of rich material. A good deal of jewellery is worn, and in most cases the nails and finger-tips and palms of the hands are tinted red with "henna," while among the lower classes

tattoo-marks on the forehead, chin, and wrists are common.

Though the women conceal all this beauty when abroad, the very young children playing in the streets are, as I have said, gaily clad, and particularly at festival times are resplendent in silks and satins of the most brilliant hues.

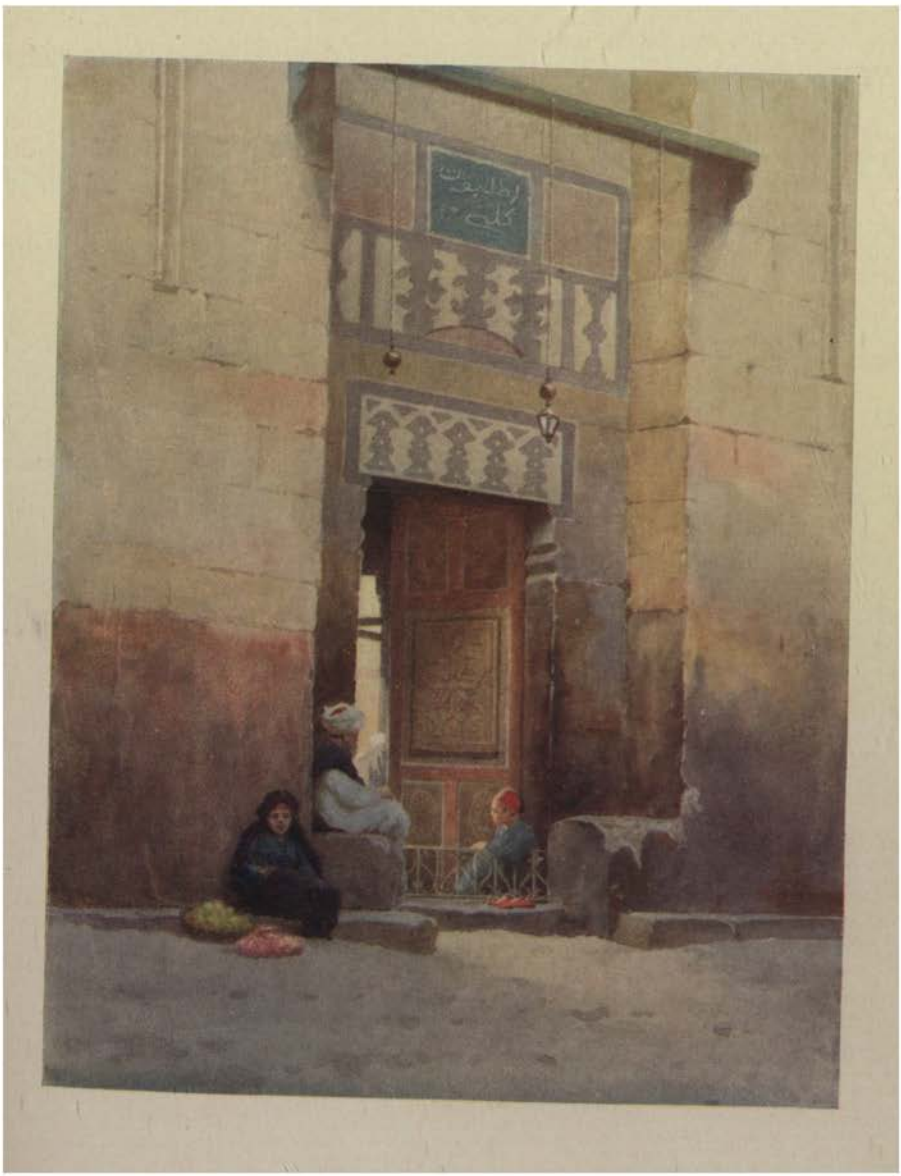
CHAPTER III

STREETS AND BAZAARS

THE work of an artist in Cairo is full of interest, and I look back upon many pleasurable experiences, while others perhaps have been for the moment irritating and occasionally disastrous. There seems to be a curious fatality which compels the painter (if he is careful to select the best point of view) to take his stand in the most uncomfortable and impossible positions. Thus in Cairo the artist will frequently find that his easel must be planted in the middle of the street, to his own discomfort and the disturbance of traffic. I often wonder at the toleration which allows so much interference with the right of way; but, as I said before, the people are good-natured souls, and usually regard the painter as a "magnoon," or kind of harmless lunatic, who is not to be taken seriously.

Naturally you are surrounded by a crowd, while heat, dust, and flies try your patience to the uttermost. If you are of a nervous or irritable disposition, do not attempt street work in Cairo. The crowd which surrounds you, perhaps completely blocking your view,

A MOSQUE DOOR, CAIRO



is only attracted by curiosity, and bears you no ill-will. A little tact and good-humour on your part will get over the difficulty pleasantly, and the remarks you will overhear among your audience are often both amusing and instructive.

While painting the mosque door which illustrates this chapter, a native of my acquaintance passing by stopped to salaam, and then remarked: "Why, Effendim, do you sit here all day in the dust?"

"Oh, I am painting, as you see."

"But why paint that poor little mosque?"

"Because I like the colour of it," I replied.

"Yes," he said, "but it is only *dirt*."

"It is beautiful, for all that," I respond; and presently, a new idea having struck him, he asks:

"And what will you do with it when it is finished?"

I explained that I would take it to England and sell it, that people liked such things with which to ornament their houses.

"Salaamat, and how much will you get for it?"

"Oh! perhaps £30."

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed. "Why, I would not give you thirty pence! But then," he added, "I suppose I know nothing about it."

It always strikes me as curious how incapable the Eastern usually is of appreciating pictorial art; he sees no resemblance whatever to the object delineated, and it would please him just as well upside down. I have met exceptions, but this is the general rule, though he always appears to take a great interest in your occupa-

tion, and frequently is most kind and solicitous for your comfort. How often while working in the streets has a small boy appeared at my elbow presenting a cup of fragrant coffee! This has been sent by the occupant of a distant shop, a man I do not know, and to whom I can only send my "salaams" in return. A chair is brought and offered in place of my presumably uncomfortable sketching-stool; and I never hesitate, when needful, to sit in whatever shop is most convenient, sure of a courteous greeting from its proprietor.

Sometimes, as a contrast, your cup of bitterness is full when a heavily laden camel with silent tread comes from behind, and, all unconscious of the havoc he is making, sweeps you and your picture into the dust, or the kicking of a passing mule destroys what might have been a masterpiece! Even then there is compensation in the concern of the native for your distress. You and your belongings are picked up, and consolation is offered by the sympathetic bystanders.

Of course the artist need not always be so placed as to be liable to such disturbance. Almost any shopkeeper will give you accommodation, while in the native café you are sure of a welcome and undisturbed freedom for work.

Let me give an example of this. I was engaged upon a large oil-painting of the Bab-el-Zuweyla, and I found that my canvas was so large that the only possibility of my working was by entirely occupying a jeweller's shop. Here I worked for a month, practically putting a stop to his business for the time, and at

THE GAMALIEH AND MOSQUE OF THE SULTAN BABAAS, CAIRO

frequent intervals was supplied with fresh coffee from an adjoining café kept by Moorsi Kharth. Neither would accept any remuneration, and the only return I was permitted to make was by painting a small portrait of the jeweller, while even to this day I have the greatest difficulty in inducing Moorsi (whom I always go to see) to accept payment for the coffee supplied.

Another instance was when painting in the "Gamalieh."[1] This is a busy thoroughfare, and the policeman on duty, seeing that I was disturbed, stopped the entire traffic of the street, until I begged him to allow it to pass as usual!

To most people, however, the culminating interest of Cairo lies in its mosques and bazaars—the former rich in arabesques and decorative features, to which I shall have occasion to refer in another chapter, and the latter presenting many architectural charms, and a phase of life as picturesque as that to be seen outside.

The Khan-el-Khalily and its neighbour, the Persian bazaar, are perhaps the most popular because best known. Here are to be bought those costly embroideries and Eastern rugs custom compels you to take away from Cairo. Certainly the effect of the carpet bazaar, whose soft grey light adds an additional tenderness to the harmonious colour of its contents, would lead any one to extravagance; while the refreshing coolness of the Persian bazaar tempts the tired sightseer to rest a while, only to fall a prey to the

[1] Means Camel-way.

blandishments of the traders and the charm of the delicate fabrics so seductively spread before him.

Purchasing in the bazaars is a matter not to be undertaken lightly, and requires time and patience. Except in one or two shops which are principally frequented by Europeans, fixed prices are unknown, and the article is only worth what can be obtained for it. Extravagant prices are often asked, to which you counter by offering a quarter of the sum as a basis of discussion, and sometimes days may be spent in negotiation before a bargain is made.

I remember some time ago, while painting in the carpet bazaar, I found an American lady whom I knew slightly, in hopeless despair over the price demanded for a really beautiful rug upon which she had set her affections. I quietly induced her to go away, and, taking up the negotiation on her behalf, eventually secured it for one-third of the sum originally asked. The lady was happy, and the dealer perfectly content, knowing that he could not have got more. Bargaining is a *game* thoroughly enjoyed on both sides, and, if played with proper patience and good feeling, productive of mutual admiration, if not respect. Beware of *haste*, however. There is an Egyptian proverb, "El agela min esh Shaitan" (Haste is from the devil), and shopping in the bazaars seems specially to come within the ban. For instance, a gentleman, no doubt pressed for time, was making a purchase here, and at once paid the price asked, and hurried away. I found the dealer presently in tears, and asked what ailed him.

"I have sold that embroidery for so much." "Well," I said, "was not that the price you wanted?" "Yes," he replied, "but why did I not ask *double!*" so that the buyer probably paid a great deal too much for his purchase, and left the dealer unhappy—all due to haste. Few of us, however, could reach the sublime heights of one shopkeeper I encountered in the Suk-en-Nahassin (or coppersmiths' bazaar). I wished to buy a "sheesha," or water-pipe, and saw the one I wanted just over the man's head. With the blandest smile, "El Ṇahass" pointed out that he was seated then, and the pipe out of reach, but would I mind getting it another day when he was standing, as he saw me pass that way very often, and there could be no hurry!

This street of the coppersmiths is one of the most interesting of bazaar streets. Here in poky little shops are sold all sorts of domestic utensils in brass and copper, nearly always beautiful in form, though rather rough in workmanship. A very large trade is done here, the natives often investing savings in copper-work, which is always sold by weight, and is readily marketable in case of need. Out of this branch the shoemakers' and silversmiths' bazaars, and, crossing the Muski, its continuation forms that of the cloth-sellers, from which open the spice, scent, and Tunis bazaars. The latter is very paintable, though entirely lacking anything in the way of *structural* beauty.

The whole of this district is one of superabundant interest. From the Bab-en-Nasr to the Sharia Mohammed

Ali is one long sequence of animated pictures, in which appear types of almost every Oriental race. Moors from Fez, Algerines and Tunisians from the western states, and from the East, Syrians, Persians, and traders from Cashmere—all are to be found among its teeming population, each by costume and facial characteristics readily distinguishable from their Egyptian fellows.

Various incidents of greater or less importance attract attention. See how majestically the women walk, carrying on their heads the quaintly shaped "balass,"[1] or, cross-legged on the shoulder, the few weeks old infant which clings tightly to its mother's head-dress. How strangely also trivial facts occasionally strike the onlooker! I well remember my momentary sense of astonishment when for the first time I heard a native infant cry. It was so entirely like one of our own, that I felt quite a glow of sympathy and kinship. Notice also the kindness shown to the blind or crippled by the passers-by; or you may see a native sharing his frugal meal with the mangy and half-starved dog he would be defiled by touching.

Here and there, let into the walls, are large slabs of stone, frequently richly inscribed, from which project one or more nozzles or spouts. These lead to a water-tank within, and by sucking the wayfarer is able to quench his thirst. See those two little mites, hot and tired by their playing, vainly endeavouring to reach the fountain so far beyond them. Presently one atom, clasping the other round the knees, succeeds in

[1] The usual two-handled water-pot.

raising her until the spout is reached; refreshed, she returns the compliment to her companion, and both continue on their way rejoicing.

In another place a poor man stretches a ragged awning of sackcloth upon two sticks inserted between the joints of masonry, and beneath its partial shade exposes the juicy water-melon or baskets of fruit he wishes to sell. What a simple, and yet how rich a picture! See the shadow cast by the awning, orange within, but blue-edged; how strong a bit of colour it is against the dusty wall it traverses, and how the fruit, half in sunlight, half in shade, contrasts with the faded costume of the vendor—all the colours of the rainbow in six feet square, combined with what a variety of texture and effective light and shade! Such pictures surround you everywhere, until the mind becomes bewildered by the wealth of subject the streets afford.

The series of streets from the Bab-en-Nasr to the Citadel forms the main transverse thoroughfare of Cairo, and is thoroughly familiar to tourists. Here most of the sightseeing is done, and many of the more important mosques are to be found. A splendid view of this quarter is to be had from the tower of the Hôtel du Nil close by, from the top of which the domes and minarets of all the best-known mosques surround you, and hardly any suggestion of modern life is visible.

One of the most effective bits here is the fine Bab-el-Zuweyla or "Metwali" gate, so called from its twin minarets, which lift themselves high above the massive structure of the gate itself. Until a few years ago the

last stage of the minarets was wanting, but these have recently been restored by the department created for the preservation of Arabic monuments. This department has already done a great amount of excellent restoration as well as preservation, and without doubt has secured the continued existence of many buildings of great historic interest, which would otherwise most certainly have perished. While fully appreciating the good work already done, I would venture a criticism upon the restoration of the minarets of the Bab-el-Zuweyla and the mosque of the Sultan Barkûk. In each case the department has rebuilt the final stage in the delicate form of cupola supported by pillars, which, though a common feature enough, is hardly in keeping with the rest of the structure in these instances; and to the best of my belief these stages were originally of *solid* walling, embellished with exterior carvings and slightly relieved pilasters. Passing through the gate, you come to the flag or tent-makers' bazaar, cool and shady beneath its wooden roof; and beyond are streets of varying interest which eventually lead into the very prosaic Sharia Mohammed Ali.

Behind and around these principal bazaar streets are quarters little known, but rich in monuments of domestic architecture and decoration. Here palaces of the Memlūk days, at present in the occupation of the lowest classes, watch mournfully over narrow lanes now practically deserted. Life here is subdued as compared with the trading centres, but the scene retains some flavour of its bygone magnificence. Handsome doorways,

whose rich carvings are partly hidden by the accumulated débris of generations, lead into courtyards rich in arabesques, and from which opens the "mandara," or guest-room, whose tesselated pavements and marble fountains speak of the sumptuous life of former days. The harīm windows, which also look upon the court, are rich with the fast-disappearing "mashrubiyeh" work and perforated plaster lights. Carved corbels support the ornate pillars and beams of ceilings still resplendent with the rich painting and gilding which has to some extent withstood the ravages of time. Mural decorations and marble flooring, panelled doors and hanging lamp, all speak of a glorious past, which contrasts strangely with the sleeping-mats and ragged habiliments of the vagrants who now seek shelter here. It is all very sad and pathetic; and one may ride for hours through streets displaying all this picturesque incongruity, and which, so far as I can ascertain, are seldom visited by tourists, and are practically unknown even to residents in Cairo. Some of the details of these buildings are worthy of study. The street doorways are often extremely richly carved in designs of great variety, each stone being frequently separately treated, and the whole of the ornamented portion framed by a double string, or beading, which interlaces at intervals and forms at the imposts a plaited design of great beauty. The door itself is usually plain timber, heavily studded with iron nails, and perhaps boasting a knocker of rich design and material. The interior doors of the houses are, however, richly panelled in a great variety of

patterns. Each panel is built up of separate pieces of wood, which allow of a certain amount of "play," the separate pieces being easily moved by the finger. The same principle is applied to "mashrubiyeh" work, this freedom in the joints protecting the whole from possible destruction due to warping and the buckling caused by varying temperature and humidity.

The perforated plaster windows which often form the upper lights in a "mashrubiyeh," and are to be found in most of the mosques, have one ingenious feature. The design is usually of a floral nature, and is cut in the slab of plaster, the lower edge of each perforation being at an angle of 45 degrees, so that when seen from below no intervening material interferes with the effect of the pattern. As these windows are almost always placed high in the walls, the effect of their delicate tracery, in which is set coloured glass, tells very brilliantly through the gloom. A great amount of judgment is also displayed in the decoration of their ceilings, which are usually one or other of two kinds. One is a rich canopy of hammer beams, frequently carved at the edges and illuminated in gold and colours, the intervening spaces consisting of flat boarding similarly decorated. The other is of *appliqué* work, or thin strips of wood nailed upon the boarding so as to form a geometric design of a very intricate character. These strips are usually gilded, and the interstices painted blue, green, and red. The whole effect is rich in the extreme, and the colours employed are of great purity and brilliance, so as to

shine through the gloom of the lofty interiors. I have also noticed that instead of *mixing* pigments into greens or purples, etc., the effect of these colours is sometimes produced by painting the whole surface blue, through which run thin lines, or series of small spots, of yellow or red, as the case may be, and the eye from a distance blends the whole into the desired hue.

Whether in their stone-carving, pavements, woodwork, or decoration, these people were certainly great artists; and the painter, in the intervals of work, may learn much from a study of such examples of each as are still left in Cairo.

The question naturally arises, Where are the best examples to be found? Any good dragoman or intelligent donkey-boy will be able to show the inquirer several houses such as I have mentioned, where still remains, though more or less dilapidated, practically all of its original splendour of decoration. The pavements and tilework perhaps will be broken, but sufficient remains to give a very complete idea of the whole. The ceilings and domed centre-lights are generally fairly perfect, the "mashrubiyeh" work perhaps having suffered most of all. In some rooms the panelled "dulab," or wall-cupboard, reveals secret passages and hiding-places, suggestive of the romantic intrigues they were designed to cover, and to which the quotations from the Korān and religious proverbs with which frieze and windows are enriched form a standing reproof.

I was fortunate enough some years ago to secure

the best of the ornamental woodwork from two such houses, condemned to demolition as unsafe. Altogether I was able to remove a great many fine "mashrubiyeh" windows of a good period, as well as several panelled doors and decorated "dulab."

The ceilings were particularly fine, but proved to be so full of vermin that I dared not remove them, and I much regretted that lack of accommodation prevented my securing a great deal of stone and marble ornamentation. Such opportunities are rare, however, and I am glad to see that, among its other functions, the department so ably conducted by Hertz Bey has the power to label any house which is considered a good example of domestic art, "Protected"; thus, while the department may or may not require to do anything in the way of preservation, the building remains under supervision and is secured against possible acts of vandalism.

Close to the Bab-el-Zuweyla is a fine house recently completely restored by Hertz Bey and his assistants, which, I believe, can be inspected on application, while in the neighbouring mosque a most perfect piece of illuminated ceiling restoration may be seen.

Mena House Hotel now has some of the finest examples of "mashrubiyeh" work, especially in the eastern balcony, and in several rooms are good examples of carved woodwork and inlaid mural panels; and in the grand salon of the French Embassy also is a fine collection of decorative work, all of which is genuine and the best of its kind. Most of the old furniture of wood- or brass-work has disappeared,

though a good many examples are to be found in the Arabic Museum in Cairo, while in the South Kensington Museum are many fine examples of "mashrubiyeh," brass, and inlaid work, notably several inlaid panels of ivory and ebony.

CHAPTER IV

MOSQUES AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS

EVERY one who visits Cairo "does" the mosques as a matter of course, and evinces a certain amount of interest in what he sees. The blue tiles of Ibrahim Aga, the splendid effect of the great doorway of the Sultan Hassan Mosque, or the delicate ornament and graceful minaret of Kait Bey are each in turn admired. To how many of such visitors, however, does it occur that in them is embodied much of the history of Cairo, and that in its mosques and public buildings is the most perfect expression of that elegant and distinctive art which we call Saracenic? Here is an architecture of well-defined periods, complete in its expression, elaborate in the application of its ornament, of older date than the Gothic style they admire and reverence so much at home, and of which it is, to some extent at least, the possible origin.

It is not within the province of this book to enter into an elaborate history of the origin and development of the style: the subject has been fully dealt with elsewhere by experts. It will suffice for our purpose

A DUSTY DAY AT THE TOMBS OF THE KHALIFS

H. Talbot. Kelly

to remind ourselves that its evolution dates from the early part of the seventh century, when in the twenty-first year of the Hejira (A.D. 642) the "Jehad" proclaimed by Mohammed had resulted not only in the subjugation of Arabia, Syria, and Persia, but witnessed also the conquest of Egypt and the building of the first Mohammedan mosque in Cairo.[1]

Initially, Mohammedan art was simply the adaptation of existing forms to the necessities of the new faith, the models being principally the Byzantine churches or the Roman temples in Syria and Egypt.

In plan the mosque closely follows that of the Basilica, the chancel becoming reduced in size, and taking the form of the "mihrab" or niche in the eastern wall, but in other respects, at least in the earlier periods of the style, remaining much the same.

The first real development was the substitution, for structural reasons, of the pointed arch in place of the semicircular one which characterises Byzantine and Roman alike; and in the building of the Mosque of Ibn Tulun in A.D. 876 we find for the first time a building in which the "broken arch" was carried out throughout the entire structure, and the first expression of purely Saracenic principles of decoration. This was nearly three hundred years before the pointed arch was introduced into England, and was contemporary with our Anglo-Saxon period of architecture, while before the introduction of the Norman style into

[1] The Mosque of Amr in old Cairo.

England the university Mosque of El Azhar (or "the splendid") was founded (A.D. 970).

Nearly all the earlier mosques consisted of a more or less square court surrounded by cloisters supported on pillars, which in many cases, as in El Azhar and Kalaūn, were robbed from Christian churches or Greek and Roman temples.

We see then that, quite apart from any pictorial value these mosques may have, their historic interest is great; and it is remarkable that at a time when Gothic in Europe was declining, the Saracenic style in Egypt produced its most perfect example in the tomb mosque of Kait Bey, and for a considerable time subsequently continued to produce good designs. Generally speaking, the mosque was also the mausoleum of its founder, such tomb mosques being distinguished by the dome in addition to the minaret; for while the latter is a usual feature in mosque design, the dome is only employed when marking some burial-place below.[1] It is worth remark also that in most cases these monuments of art were the design of *one* man, and were completed during the lifetime of an individual; and, although lacking some of the interest which attaches to the mixed styles and gradual development of most of our cathedral piles, they have instead a completeness and homogeneity which leave nothing to be desired.

I have already mentioned several of the more important mosques which should be seen and studied,

[1] This refers to the *great* dome, and does not apply to the small dome or cupola frequently placed over the niche.

and would add those of El Ghury and Sultan Barkûk as very important examples, while among those of later date the little Mosque of Abu-Bekr, recently beautifully and carefully restored, has many points of interest, especially in its tile dados and open metal-work.

Viewed from the streets, the mosques are usually of simple but dignified design. The façade is generally of plain masonry, broken only by the several tiers of small windows, either square, round-headed, or occasionally circular, and filled in with wrought-iron work of a more or less ornate character. Frequently these windows are placed in shallow recesses, finishing in a cornice of carved stone, the shadows from which, as well as from the projecting wall, serving to break up an otherwise flat space into perpendicular lines.

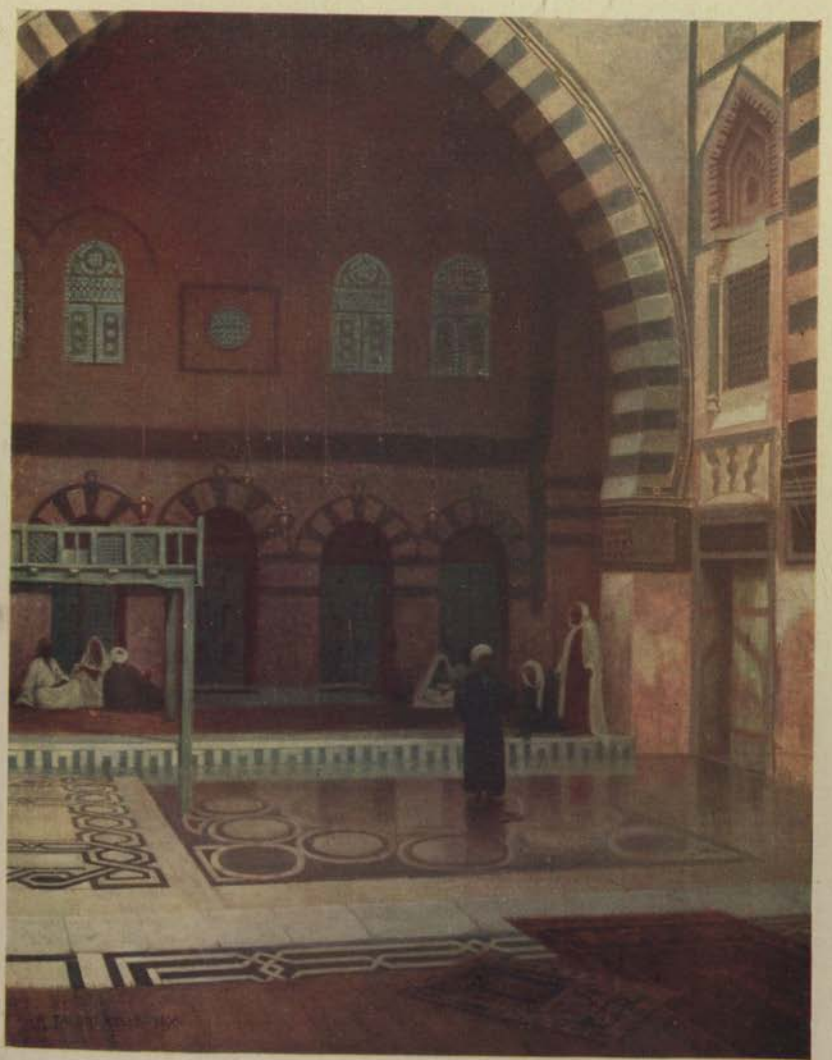
The sky-line is usually battlemented or finished by a projecting cornice, as in the Hassan Mosque. Above this rises the square base of the dome, gradually returned by "squinches" to the circular form of the dome itself, and above all rise one or more minarets of two or three diminishing stages, terminating in a bold yet delicately proportioned cupola or finial. Exterior ornament is usually confined to the minarets, the dome, and especially to the doorways, which are trefoil-headed and richly embellished with pendentive carvings, a fitting framework to the handsome metal-work which is so common a feature of the door itself.

You will notice in nearly all cases that the lintel of the door is formed of stone, apparently coloured in black and white designs of a curious pattern. In

reality the span is a *built* structure, the several stones of which are cut into these curious patterns and *slid* into each other, thus locking together on the principle of the keyed arch. Across the entrance is a low wooden railing or barrier, which marks the boundary of the mosque. No one may cross this barrier shod, for beyond is holy ground. Some exteriors are decorated with friezes of inscribed stonework, as in Kalaūn, whose broad Arabic inscription forms a very striking feature in its decoration. This application of ornamental writing to decorative purposes is very valuable, and is to be found about the doorways of most mosques; and though Arabic or the earlier Cufic characters lend themselves more easily to decorative treatment, I often think that even European architects might make more use of *lettering* in their decoration, thus serving the double purpose of ornament and information. I should mention that the alternate red and white stripes on the outer walls are not always part of the original scheme, but in many cases have their origin in the fact that, when carrying out the illuminations ordered to celebrate Mohammed Ali's Syrian conquests, it was found very difficult to adequately treat the vast expanse of wall presented by the mosques of the city, and consequently the distemper colouring of the alternate courses was resorted to as a substitute for other forms of decoration. This colouration was almost invariably in red and yellow, and the darker banding of black and green found in so many buildings may be taken as being part of the original design.

It is not only as *architecture* that these buildings

THE HOUSE OF PRAYER



should be studied, however. Forbidden by his religion to reproduce human or animal forms, as savouring of idolatry, ordinary pictorial representation was denied the Moslem artist, who was therefore obliged to seek some other means of expression.[1] This has resulted in the development of a form of applied art, rich in its elaboration, most suitable to its purpose, and in every way original and artistic.

Two dominant features will at once strike the beholder : first, the pendentive form of carving or plaster-work which embellishes corbels and brackets, and lends such an air of grace and lightness to canopy or arch ; and secondly, that curiously involved geometric design which characterises almost all their schemes of decoration. Both forms are almost universally applied, and are found alike in buildings and furniture.

The best examples of the pendentive are to be found in the corbelling which supports the stages of minarets, or in the cornices and doorways of such mosques as Sultan Barkûk, El Ghury, and Sultan Hassan ; while the dome of Kait Bey, the bronze doors of Muayyad and Kalaūn, and the panels of nearly every "mimbar," or pulpit, are enriched with designs of a geometric character.

On studying these designs, it will be found that in most cases the radiating lines emanate from a rosette which usually forms the centre of a panel, or in larger spaces is repeated at intervals over the whole surface.

[1] Exceptions occur, as in the frieze of Sultan Hassan, but this introduction of animal life is usually the work of Persian decorators.

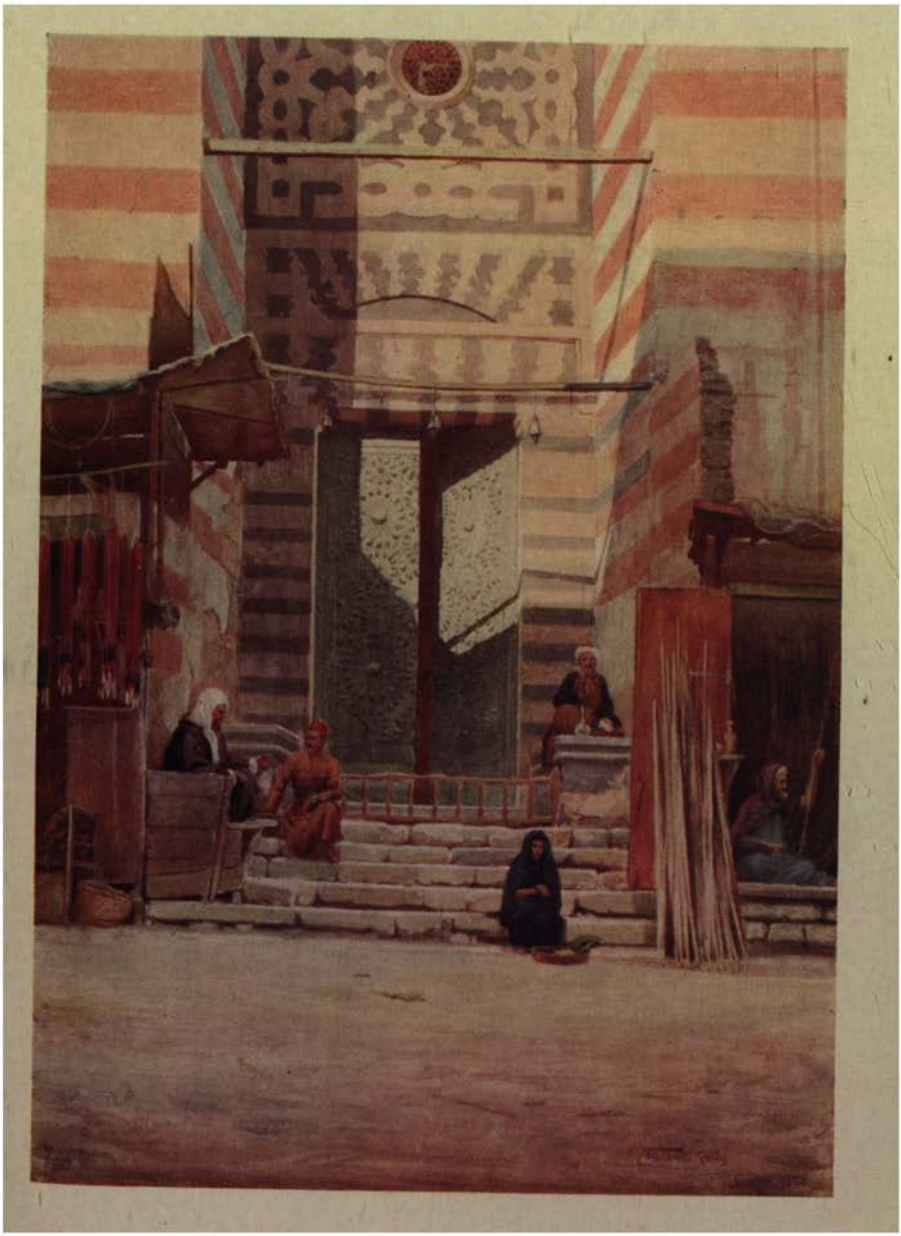
This rosette resolves itself into two, three, or more *crosses* superimposed, with an equal space between the various arms, and the ends of these, instead of being *square*, form an obtuse angle, the lines of which are extended, and by crossing and recrossing break up the intervening spaces into a variety of mathematical figures. Here again a possible influence of early Christian forms upon a style of art so differentially developed may perhaps be traced.

In the painted ceilings, brass lamps, or inlaid coffee-tables we find the same form of ornament, and in many cases the lines are of a different material, and raised above the intervening spaces, which are individually carved, giving the whole an extremely rich effect.

Most of the furniture of the mosques has long ago disappeared, except where, as in the stone pulpit of Barkûk, it has been built in as part of the structure.

South Kensington Museum possesses several of these panelled pulpits of wood, such as that of Kait Bey, and Lagin's pulpit from Ibn Tulun, in addition to many fine examples of panelled doors, copper and brass drinking-vessels, candlesticks, etc.; and in the Cairo Museum in the Hakim Mosque are many of the exquisite lamps or chandeliers of perforated and chased metal-work formerly hanging in the mosques, as well as several finely wrought coffee-tables, and other specimens of the best art of the Saracens. Unfortunately, many more beautiful pieces have been surreptitiously removed and sold to dealers, and have passed into the hands of private collectors.

THE BRONZE DOORS OF EL-MARISTAN, EL-KELAŪN



In their tilework, tesselated pavements, the highly ornate "mihrab," and indeed in every detail of their decoration, the mosques of Cairo furnish a wide field for study ; but perhaps enough has been said to convince the casual visitor that they have an interest quite apart from being simply the places of worship of the "faithful."

Two other features I should like to mention before leaving this subject. In the Mosque of Kalaūn is a very effective use of woodwork, both in the painted and inscribed frieze course which runs entirely round the interior, and also in the open trellis-work which surrounds the tomb and forms the grill between the "sebeel" and mosque proper ; and I have noticed in many places where an archway is formed by keyed stone-work, each stone is ornamented *separately*, so that the structure is not disguised, as is so often the case with us, where joints are hidden and perhaps a floral relief made to appear as the support of the superstructure.

It always seems to me that these mosques are characterised by great dignity of proportion, accurate spacing, and a very discriminating use of ornament. The first aim would seem to be to satisfy structural demands, and, when these principles were fulfilled, ornament was laid on lavishly, but in the right place, and was never permitted to disguise building requirements, or to interfere with the effect of the building as a whole.

Many superstitions attach to these mosques—'Amr, for instance, with its twin pillars, between which none but the elect are supposed to be able to pass, while several are associated with Kalaūn. Here the particularly

ornate "mihrab" is credited with healing virtue, and any day men and women may be seen rubbing lemons on one of its pilasters, and licking up the moisture in the firm belief that a cure will ensue. A little stick hangs on the railing of the tomb; this is used to cure fools or idiots, by striking them on the head. Women also bring their ailing children here for relief. In this case water is poured into a large porphyry bowl, and with another piece of the same stone they grind until the water is red and muddy, the mixture being given to the children with absolute confidence in its medicinal property.

The Red Mosque at Būlak also has peculiar sanctity. I purposed painting it some years ago, but my servant warned me that it would be useless my making the attempt. "Why so?" I asked, and he gravely informed me that "once an artist tried to do so, and a stone fell from the minaret and killed him; on another occasion the water of the 'meydaah,' or tank, had turned to blood; and he was sure that whatever I might paint during the day 'Allah' would obliterate by night, even if nothing worse befell." It so happens that, other work interfering, I have never yet been able to carry out my intention, and so disabuse my servant's mind of its curious belief.

It is said that for a year the devout Moslem may worship each day in a different mosque without completing the round of Cairo's religious edifices. This statement is certainly well inside the mark, there being probably four hundred or more recognised mosques in

GRILL IN THE MOSQUE OF THE SULTAN KELAŪN

the city, in addition to many sheykhs' tombs, where devotees may perform their "rekka."

Any visitor wandering through the streets of Cairo could not fail to be struck with the number and, in many cases, the extreme beauty of these buildings.

Their origin, however, was not due entirely to devout feeling or a sense of religious obligation. Pictorial and sculptural representation being forbidden by the Mohammedan code, such buildings formed the only possible monument to departed greatness, and supplied much of the historical record of Mohammedan rule in Egypt. Another explanation of the extraordinary number of these buildings may be found in the fact that in olden days Khalifs and Cadis, Pashas and Muftis, were alike rapacious, and not over-scrupulous to regard the wishes of departed city fathers as to the disposal of their worldly goods, and their legitimate heirs not infrequently went begging in consequence of official sequestration in the name of God and the Prophet. So frequent were these robberies in the name of the law, that wealthy merchants preferred to build during their lifetime, or to bequeath their money for the erection of a mosque or sebeel; any money willed for this purpose being regarded as a sacred trust, and therefore inviolable.

These sebeels, with their beautiful open metal grills, which are so frequent an adornment to the streets of Cairo, are simply public fountains at which the wayfarers quench their thirst, and the devout perform their ablutions before worshipping in the mosque to

which they are frequently attached. The upper story is invariably a school, to which some small endowment attaches, sufficient at any rate to remunerate the "malim" for his labours. Here the youth of the district were wont to receive their education, which consisted almost entirely of a committal to memory of selected passages from the Korān.

Bequests such as the foregoing were usually vested in the Cadi or Mufti, who was often called upon to administer estates left for purposes of a most eccentric character. As an instance, I may mention the Beyt-el-Mufti, which, with its beautiful garden, adjoins the Hôtel du Nil in the heart of Cairo. In this case the testator (so I understand) bequeathed a considerable fortune for the foundation of a home for the stray cats of Cairo. The Mufti, wise in his generation, began to build a house of the most ornate description, richly embellished with arabesques, and surrounded by an extensive garden, in its time probably one of the most beautiful in the city. Meanwhile, some mysterious agency was evidently at work, for, on completion of the building, the Mufti was able to declare that, as there were no homeless cats left in Cairo, the testament was void, and promptly entered into occupation himself! To-day the house is in a ruinous condition, and occupied by people of the lowest origin.

In those days the powers vested in the Mufti and Cadi were great, and the administration of the law as interpreted by them often furnished incidents of the most amusing description. In wandering round the Helmieh

SEBEEL OF THE MOSQUE OF THE SULTAN KELAŪN

quarter, I happened upon a public bakehouse, of which my servant told me the following story. The baker was a Moslem, his clients being almost entirely of the same religion. The oven was full of the bread-stuffs of the true believers, and as the baker was about to close the door, a neighbour (who happened to be a Christian) brought in a pie to be cooked with the rest. Presently a most delicious odour pervaded the house, exciting the curiosity both of the baker and his wife. Neither could imagine what was the nature of this dish, the like of which they had never smelt before. Investigation showed that the seductive smell emanated from the Christian pie. "What could be in it!" Neither could guess. Finally, curiosity overcoming prudence, the baker's wife, when her husband's back was turned, surreptitiously opened the oven door and poked her finger through the crust, determined at all hazards to taste the dish. How delicious! and again and again the greedy fingers were thrust through the pie-crust, until quite a considerable portion of it had been consumed. Filled with consternation at what she had done, she called her husband to view the wreck and devise some way out of the scrape. "Now, may Allah protect me!" exclaimed the wretched man. "O miserable woman! see how you have brought disgrace upon an honest man. How can I now deliver to the Christian his pie?" and with loud lamentations he deplored the circumstances which had brought upon him the disgrace of betraying his trust. The wife's tears and expostulations, however, soon persuaded the husband that the

temptation was too great to be withstood, and Eve-like she artfully induced him to taste for himself and see how little she was to blame, and between them the pie was speedily demolished.

Whilst ruefully contemplating the empty dish, and wondering what was to be done, the Christian arrived and demanded his pie.

"Which pie?" said the baker.

"The pork pie I left this morning, the one in the earthen dish."

"Pork!" exclaimed the baker, "you rascally Nasrani, have you dared to defile the food of the true believers with unclean flesh!" So saying, he gave the unfortunate man a sound beating, sending him away bleeding and dishevelled.

Now for the sequel. The Christian hied to the Cadi for redress. After hearing all the evidence, the Cadi decided that the matter was a weighty one, and, before giving his decision, ordered a fresh pie to be baked in order to enable him to decide the extent of the temptation placed before the baker and his wife. Having eaten the pie, he gave judgment as follows:— As regards the baker, he was morally excused for eating the pie, on the ground that the temptation was irresistible, but that, having stolen the Christian's food, beaten him, and torn his clothes, he must pay him compensation, and a fine to the Cadi for his breach of trust as custodian of a public bakehouse.

With regard to the Christian: he, having defiled a Moslem oven by sending to be baked in it an unclean

dish, is ordered to defray the cost of rebuilding it, and must also pay a fine to the Cadi for having placed a temptation in the way of a true believer, and for having contaminated the food of the faithful.

The net result being that both baker and Christian were mulcted in penalties, the Cadi alone being enriched by the amount of the fines imposed, besides enjoying a forbidden luxury in the sacred name of Justice.

The Cadi's duties were many, and included a general supervision of the bazaars and shops, where a rigid control was kept over traders, and even the price of food-stuffs was determined by him.[1] In the Khan-el-Khalily and elsewhere still hang the chains and instruments of torture and death, with which summary justice was wont to be meted out to offenders. The picturesqueness of those days has perhaps to some extent disappeared, but the Cadi's court still continues to exercise its functions, and will still often furnish amusement to the onlooker.

To the uninitiated the administration of justice presents many difficulties, among which I may instance the nature of the oath to be taken by witnesses. Different sects have varying customs, and an oath which would morally bind one, exercises no control whatever upon another. Thus one man will swear "Bi 'llahi, bi 'llahi 'tanti, bi 'llahi talat" (By God, by second God, by third God, or, Three times I swear by God), and still lie, though perhaps some other form would be considered

[1] Or special official appointed for the duty.

binding; few will carelessly take the oath, "Axil b'il Talak" (I swear by the divorce), it being considered a disgrace to violate it; while among the inhabitants of the Bab-en-Nasr quarter in Cairo no certainty that the witness is truthful can be felt until he is sworn on the tomb of the Sheykh in the gate. The belief in this case is, that any one who denies the oath, and passes through the gate, will be struck dead on passing the tomb when returning! Evidently swearing is a fine art in Egypt, and the practice of the law is surrounded by peculiar difficulties.

CHAPTER V

THE ENVIRONMENTS OF CAIRO

To every artist who has painted Egypt, there comes a time when the first enthusiasm for street life and bazaar subjects begins to wane.

It may be that a sense of disappointment with his accomplishment steals over him, or the realisation that, however treated, there is always the consciousness of bricks and mortar about the subject which eventually wearies.

The first impetuous rush with which he attacks, and perhaps to a great extent realises, the many subjects the town affords, gradually gives place to a more discriminating selection of effects and incidents by which to vary what is after all a somewhat restricted range of subjects. This period may come soon, or after years of bazaar work, but, with the first unconscious yearning for space and distance and atmospheric freedom, is born in the painter his first dim appreciation of what Egypt *is*, and he begins to learn the secret of the land.

Wandering farther afield, he is pleased to find in the immediate neighbourhood of Cairo a variety of

scenes not entirely different from those to which he has been accustomed, yet with an added charm. The open-air markets of the suburbs present the same types and occupation as in town, but the horizon is wider, the vista more extended, while the merely human interest of the scene gradually assumes a lesser importance in subjects in which atmospheric effect plays an important part.

On the banks of the Nile he finds scenes which, lacking the congested life of the streets, are still full of movement and alive. Outside the walls among the dust-heaps of Fostat, or the tombs of the Khalifs, are views in which he finds the great city for the first time in repose, and enveloped in a soft light which sweetens and dignifies dome and minaret and mass of building.

Free from distracting noise and insistent detail, he is beginning to understand the *spirit* of the scene.

Each hour of the day, as the light changes, the same subject varies infinitely in colour and effect, and leads the mind to poetic treatment of the scene; and so by slow degrees the *student*, industriously reproducing what he sees, merges into the *artist* who, familiar with all the facts before him, seeks to clothe them in some beautiful idea, in which is embodied something of himself and his new-born appreciation of the light of heaven.

Picturesque as the life of the cities is, nothing in all Egypt is half so beautiful or difficult of attainment as its wonderful skies. Egypt is essentially a landscape country whose eternal flatness demands expansive treat-

THE CITADEL AND CAIRO FROM THE EAST

ment ; and no matter with what delight the earlier years of bazaar work in Cairo may have been passed, the artist is inevitably drawn to the more ethereal beauty of the larger fields of work without.

In the immediate neighbourhood of Cairo is an inexhaustible field of work for the artist, embracing almost every variety of subjects.

Pass over the bridge by the railway station and you almost immediately enter the Shūbra Avenue, the oldest and most imposing of all those with which Cairo is beautified, and reminiscent of the great Mohammed Ali and the tragic reign of Ismail. In the early years of my residence it was the fashionable drive of Cairo. Every Friday and Sunday it was thronged by the *élite* of Cairo, and for a mile or more was brilliant with military uniforms, the gay costume of the "sais" or consular "cavass," as the mixed throng of diplomat and tourist, native and European, rich and poor, waited to exchange salutations with the ever-courteous Tewfik Pasha, the late Khedive.

Shūbra is deserted now, and nothing in Cairo has ever taken the place of the bi-weekly parade in which ceremony and spontaneity were curiously intermingled. The city has spread westward, and people take the air in the Ghezireh Drive in solitary exclusiveness.

Though without its weekly pageant, the old avenue has other attractions. The gnarled trunks of sycamore and lebbek which form the avenue have all the irregular beauty of age upon them. The long vista is peopled by country-folk driving into market their

camels laden with tomatoes, etc. Here is a half-bred Arab shepherd with his piebald flock, again a wild-eyed Bedawi on his "hagin"[1] employed as a "gaffir"[2] on some neighbouring estate. Old-world houses, formerly occupied by the highest in the land, are falling into a disreputable old age. Their gates, half smothered in bougainvillæa, open into gardens of wild and unkept beauty, where marble fountains and statuary testify pathetically to a former glory long since departed. On either side of the road are glimpses of farm-lands well wooded with palms, acacia, sycamore, and cypress trees, through which in the distance may be seen the white houses of Demerdache relieved against the Gibel Achmar beyond. Here are plenty of subjects of a pastoral nature which lend themselves to poetic treatment.

Down by the river-side at Rhoda are subjects of another kind. Here the old palaces of the island and the houses of Masr-el-Atika rise from the narrow backwater, and lead the eye delightfully to the vista beyond. "Nuggars"[3] innumerable enter from the larger river, and birdlike gliding over its smooth surface, deposit their cargoes of "tibbin"[4] or corn upon the banks.

It is an animated scene as the work of unloading proceeds amidst the babel of noise inseparable from any congregation of natives. Women and children are there washing their clothing and utensils, or drawing their domestic water-supply. Over all is a sun-bathed atmo-

[1] Running camel or dromedary.
[2] Watchman.
[3] Cargo boats.
[4] Chopped straw.

ON THE ISLAND OF RHODA

1897.
Robert Kelly

sphere, which softens all tints and brings them into harmony with the eternal blue of the sky.

Across the bridge at Ghezireh the high mud-banks are crowned by a grove of date-palms, below which a fleet of boats lie in readiness for the opening of the bridge; beyond rise the picturesque old houses of Būlak, against which the floating river-life stands out in bold relief.

In the early morning before the sun has dissipated the mists, how silvery it all is! and again at sunset look back at Cairo and see how the last of the sunlight gilds the Mokattam Hills, behind which the full moon rises, pale in the warm sky. The city, half hidden by the gardens of Rhoda, is but a suggestion in blue haze, above which the Citadel and Mosque of Mohammed Ali rise to catch a glint of the fading light. Below, the river with its long-drawn reflections is already drowsily asleep. Such are some of the pictures to be found everywhere, whose interesting details are beautified by the glory of some atmospheric effect.

At Abbasiyeh and Demerdache are many subjects for the painter, in which a new feature presents itself in the uniforms of the soldiers, British or native, stationed there. "Tommy Atkins" is a good deal in evidence in Cairo, and particularly here, and I must pay him the tribute of saying that he is nearly always well behaved. I have seldom seen a soldier drunk, and in many ways he has had a good influence upon the people. I was painting here some time ago close to a house occupied by a native gentleman, who volunteered the statement that formerly Demerdache

and district was a "den of thieves" (*kharamieh*); but since the quartering of troops there, the people were well behaved, and the value of all property had improved. His influence upon the Egyptian troops has been most marked. In 1883 I saw what remained of Arabi's army reviewed by the then Khedive; it was simply a rabble, ill clothed, only partially armed, and, as it seemed to me, lacking in even the elements of discipline and drill. See the same troops to-day, after twenty years of close association with their English comrades and training by British officers. Their regiments, smart and soldierly, move with a dash and precision which compare favourably with our own crack corps; and, whatever their views before conscription, there is no doubt that, once enlisted, the native soldier has developed a passion for drill which is quite remarkable.

Looking back towards Cairo, there is a fine view of the tombs of the Khalifs, and the Citadel Mosque beyond, which, particularly at sunset, is very striking. Indeed, many pictures may be made hereabouts, and it is curious how well the Mohammed Ali Mosque looks from a distance, though in itself so poor in design and proportion. Its situation, however, is superb, and it dominates everything for miles around. There is a particularly striking view of it from near Tūra. Here the intervening desert rises between you and Cairo, blotting out all of the city except the Citadel itself, which, blue in the distance, stands up solitary and graceful beyond the ridge.

CAIRO FROM THE RIVER—EVENING

When working in these outlying districts, the artist is as a rule free from the ordinary disturbances of the city. Heat, glare, and thirst, however, often supply the place of other irritations; indeed, one might almost say that, except in the early morning or twilight, the artist has always got *something* to put up with. In painting in the open the glare and heat are often very trying, but I am convinced that the use of a sketching-umbrella is fatal to colour. The painter is then seated in a little purple island of shadow surrounded by a sea of yellow light, conditions under which it appears to me to be impossible to determine the value of the pigment you are using. I have always found it best to dispense with artificial shade, and, should the glare prove insupportable, a little green paint or charcoal rubbed on the under eyelid gives immense relief.

Sometimes accidents such as a sudden swirl of dust do grievous damage to your work, and at times physical discomfort overtakes you in other ways. Let me give an instance. I had selected a subject several miles out in the desert from Tūra, and for lack of other means I reached the place on mule-back and my servant on a donkey, neither beast having either saddle or bridle, and, as I had gone out for the day, a heavy lunch-basket was added to the other impedimenta. After working all day, at sunset I prepared to return, and, putting my boy on the mule, loaded him up with as much of my baggage as he could well manage. Just as I was mounting my steed, I heard a shout from my servant, and turned round in time to see him spread-eagled in the air, the baggage

scattered in all directions, and the mule stampeding for the hills! My donkey immediately followed the example and left us stranded miles from anywhere and night approaching. The chance of catching a train at Tūra being remote, I decided to tramp back to Cairo, and, guided by the distant Citadel, we began the march. Loaded as we were with the various paraphernalia, it was no easy work even on good ground; but, just as darkness overtook us, we got into some miles of rough débris from old quarries, over which we alternately climbed and stumbled. After three hours of most wearisome and dangerous walking, we eventually reached the Citadel and got a conveyance home. My boy, who had been silent for a long time, suddenly broke out—

"My master, I will always thank Allah for this day."

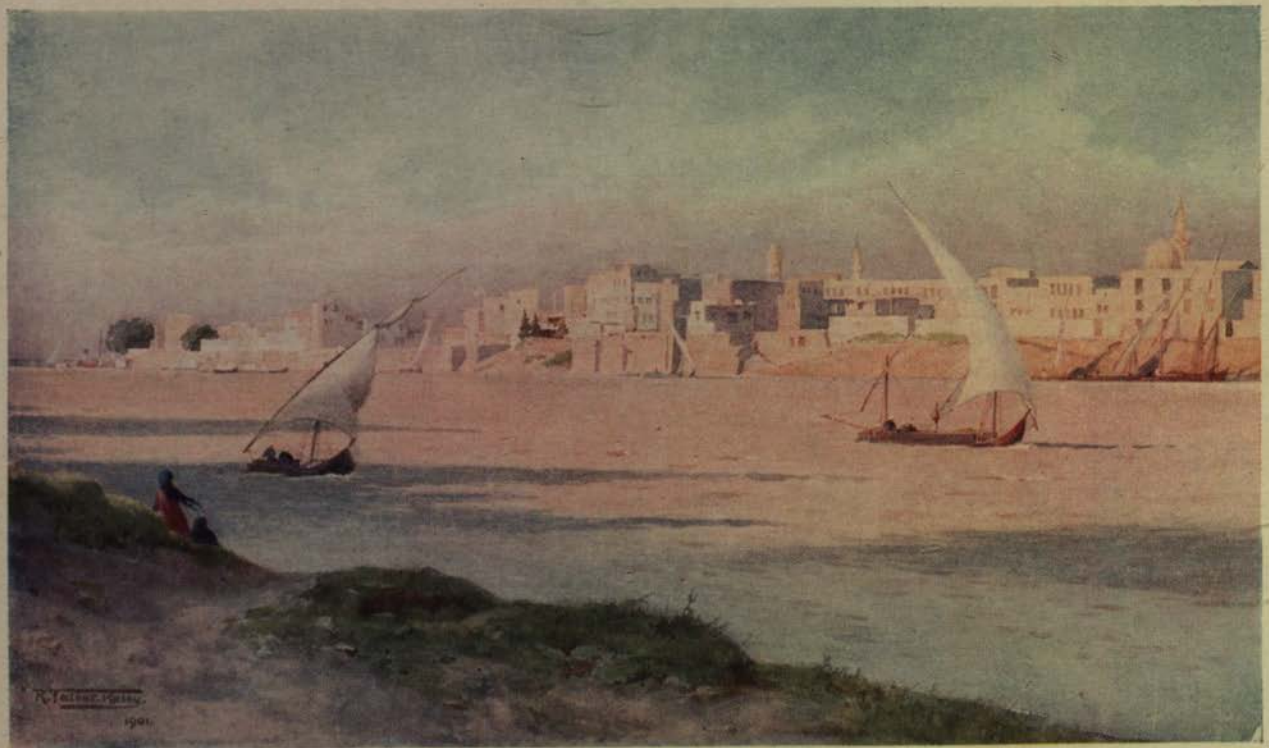
"Why?" I said.

"Because never again in my life can I be so unhappy as to-day."

Eastern philosophy evidently has its advantages.

Behind Abbasiyeh, lying in between the Mokattam Hills and the Gibel Achmar, is a stretch of desert as good in form and colour as any in the country. Here, an hour's donkey-ride from Cairo, is a fresh range of subject. Tourists know it well, as it is the way to the so-called petrified forests. For many years I have painted here, and find a never-failing supply of new subjects. The desert is fascinating. Its surface is varied by water-course or pebble-bed, and an infinite variation of colour and texture. Wild growth of all

BŪLAK FROM GHEZIREH


1901.

kinds abounds, and as a contrast to the arable land of Egypt it produces a great many flowering plants. From the plain, numerous "wadys" or valleys bore into the heart of the hills, wild to a degree, and as worthy of the geologist's attention as that of the artist. One of these, a tremendous earthquake rift, ends in an abrupt wall of rock, below which is the "Ein-el-Mūsa," or Moses' Well, a favourite luncheon rendezvous. Weird and rugged to a degree, this valley always recalls to my mind the hymn :

> . . . all through the mountains, thunder-riven,
> And up from the rocky steep,
> There rose a cry to the gate of heaven,
> 'Rejoice, I have found My sheep!'

No setting for the parable could be finer or more suggestive.

All this rock is a solid mass of fossils, usually bivalves and sea-worms, though amongst others I have found a very perfect crab of large size.

From the top of the Mokattam Hills are several most impressive views, particularly from the little mosque of the Sheykh-el-Gaūchy behind the Citadel. This mosque is of a very ancient date, and forms the burial-place of the old saint whose name it bears. A lonely resting-place, which my servant explains thus. The old Sheykh had three young and beautiful wives, and on his death-bed he ordered his tomb to be built on the top of the hill in order that he might from thence be able to overlook the whole city, and see that his widows got into no mischief.

The views from here are certainly splendid. To the east lie Abbasiyeh's white buildings standing out against the sea of foliage which stretches from Kūbbeh, Zeitūn, and Matariyeh until it is lost in the blue distance of Marg. Below you lies the city of Cairo, whose extent has perhaps never before been fully realised. Beyond it to the north spread indefinitely corn- and cotton-lands, through which the silver thread of river winds towards the sea. To the west and south-west is the plateau of the Libyan desert impinging upon the cultivated land. Here are the pyramid-fields of Gizeh, Abūsir, Sakkara, and Dahshūr, and even the distant Medūn Pyramid can be seen. Beyond is the eternal desert, which finally merges into the Great Sahara. I very much doubt if there is anywhere a more impressive series of views than may be seen from the Gama Gaūchy, and this year I witnessed from it one of the weirdest effects I have ever seen in Egypt. It was approaching sunset, when a sudden dust-storm arose obscuring the view in all directions. Below me was an abyss of yellow fog, which in spite of the high wind appeared motionless; the sky was obliterated, and the very ground I stood upon had disappeared. Nothing was to be seen in any direction except the domes and minarets of the tombs of the Memlūks, which, without visible base, reared their ghostly forms in mid-air. Behind them was a luminous veil focussing in a central point of sickly whiteness, which represented all that could be seen of the setting sun.

A WADY IN THE MOKATTAM HILLS

R. Talbot Kelly 1902.

Of all the environs of Cairo, however, the pyramid-field of Gizeh is the first to attract the visitor, and I think it is the experience of most that it is only after repeated visits that any real appreciation of Pyramid or Sphinx is developed, and that their impressiveness increases with continued familiarity. The first visit is fatiguing; and so much is found to do, that emotion succumbs to physical exhaustion. The ascent of the Great Pyramid and the exploration of its interior galleries and chambers are followed by the regulation camel-ride to the Sphinx, and the inspection of the tombs. This under a hot sun, and with the constant irritation of importunate guides and curio-sellers, is a big day's work, and the traveller is usually far too tired after it all to have any sentimental regard for monuments which have mainly impressed him on account of their size, and in which he finds nothing whatever of beauty.

It is a pity that the intolerable nuisance of the Pyramid "guide" could not be done away with. Their persistence worries the new-comer, and even residents who are well known to them hardly escape their unsolicited attentions. Still, it is better than it used to be. I well remember my first visit to them in 1883, when, owing to the late campaign, tourists were a very rare exception in Cairo that winter, and the Pyramid Arabs were starving for "backsheesh."

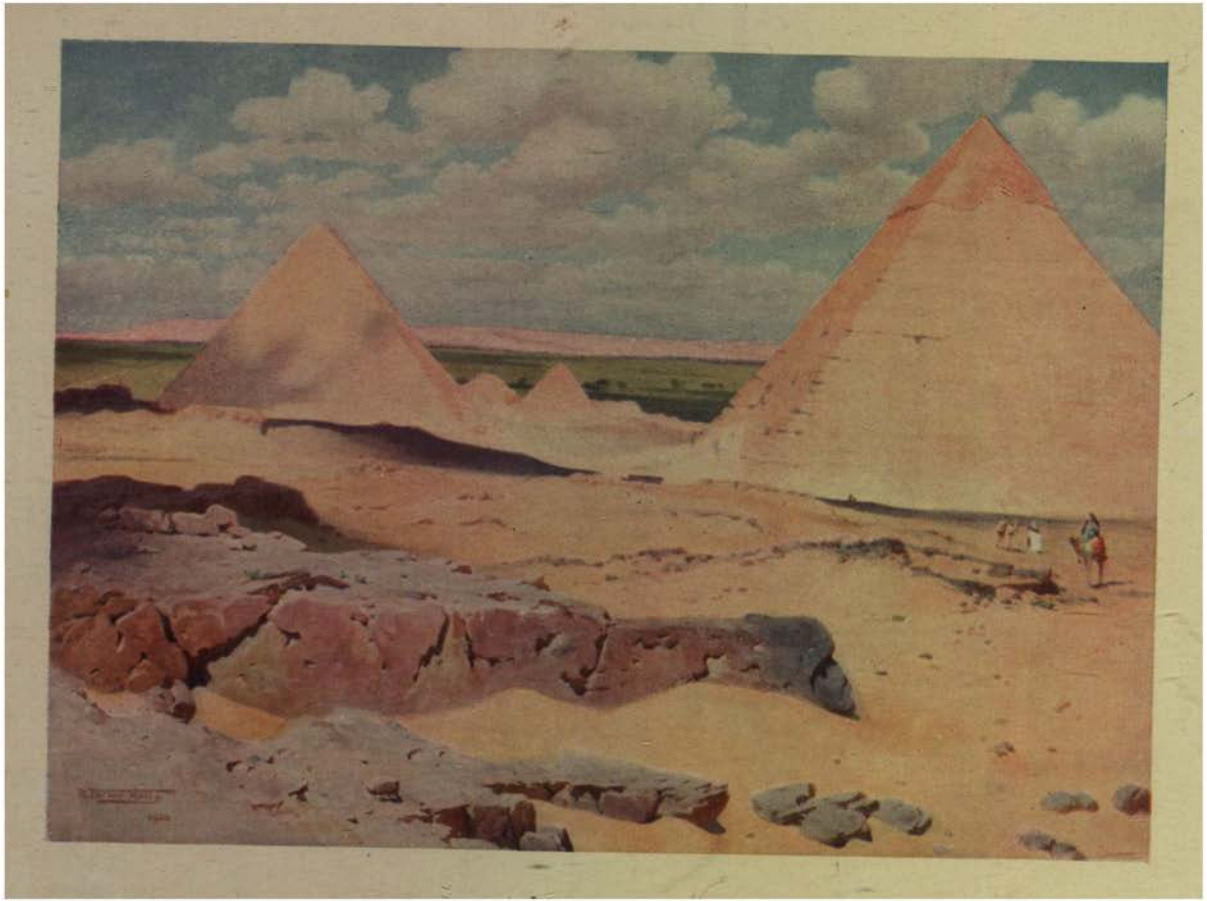
A friend joined me in the excursion, about which we had made particular inquiries, and knew to a piastre what payments had to be made. We did everything

which is expected of the well-regulated tourist, and, having paid off our guides in full, returned to our carriage to enjoy a well-earned lunch.

Presently we found that we were surrounded by a crowd of hungry-looking natives, who began to clamour for "backsheesh" in a manner which struck us as being threatening. Not liking the appearance of things, we ordered the driver to start for Cairo, and immediately a combined attack upon the carriage began. Some tried to hold the horse's head, but were kept off by the driver's whip, while my friend and myself, standing up in the carriage and each wielding a heavy oak stick, were barely able to repel the assault of those who leapt upon us as we galloped off. Every hand laid upon the carriage, and every head within reach, felt the weight of our blows until we were fairly on the high-road again, and almost clear of our assailants. A few of the most irate followed us for a mile or more, and a parting fusilade of stones concluded the episode. This was before Mena House Hotel existed, or proper regulations for the Pyramid traffic were formulated. To-day the Arabs here are pretty well-behaved, and authority is represented by several policemen who constantly patrol the vicinity of the monuments as a protection to travellers.

To properly appreciate the Pyramids they must be seen repeatedly, under all conditions, and from many points. It is difficult to grasp their huge bulk, which is perhaps best realised from a distance of a mile or more. From the road to Cairo is I think

THE PYRAMIDS OF GIZEH FROM THE DESERT



one of the best views, where desert and cornfields sharply contrast, and the Pyramids, standing boldly against the sky, are reflected in the pool which runs alongside the avenue. From the desert also is a quaint view of them, but nothing impresses so much as a quiet walk round them in the cool silence of a moonlit night. The Sphinx also, battered though it be by Mohammed Ali's artillery, when seen in all the solemnity of night is inexpressibly weird, and gives the beholder an overawing sense of eternal dignity and calm. Sit down and live with it hour by hour and night after night, and you will learn that the Sphinx is no mere monument of stone, but has a mysterious power of impressing itself upon your soul, as, looking backward through the ages, and into the dimness of the future, this most ancient and most incomprehensible of all Egypt's monuments forces upon you some slight understanding of what is meant by time and eternity.

It is rather curious that forms of such an uncompromising nature as the Pyramids should possess any pictorial value whatever, yet the fact remains that no objects in Egypt are so frequently painted, and it will be acknowledged that usually the resultant picture pleases. Many factors combine to produce this result. The surrounding desert, broken here and there by ruined mastaba or outjutting rock, sweeps in beautiful intersecting curves, to which the angle of the pyramid forms the necessary line of contradiction. Varied in colour and texture, these sand-sweeps are infinitely lovely, and in a subdued form display all

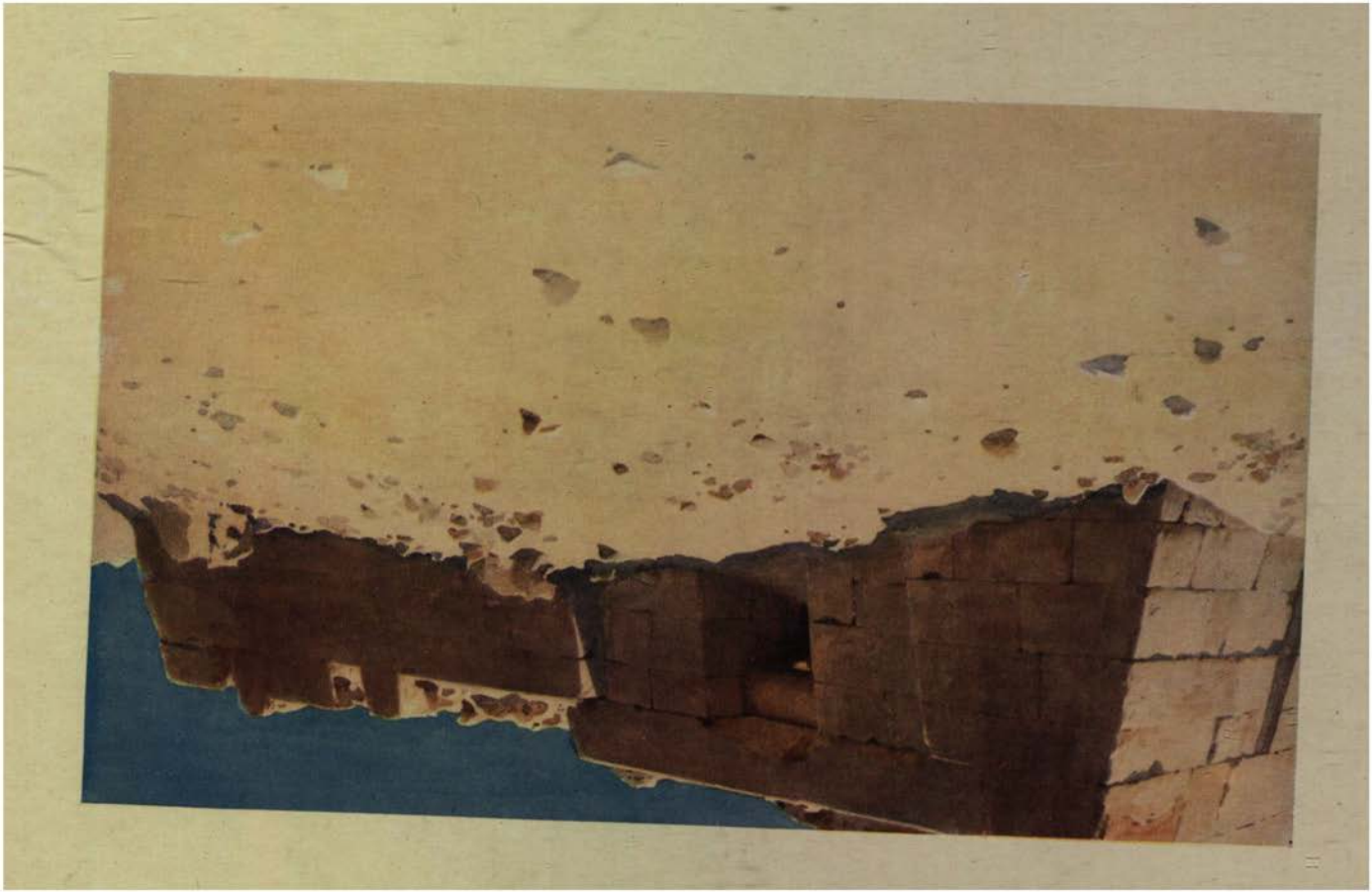
the prismatic tints. The huge bulk of the Pyramids themselves, jagged-edged and weather-worn, are glorious in a sunlight which reveals unexpected subtleties of colour, while their brilliantly illumined sides contrast sharply with the sky, which acquires a depth and intensity of blue which is almost startling. A passing cloud-shadow or occasional group of figures mark points of distance which the clearness of the air conceals, and give scale to monuments whose immensity is scarcely to be comprehended.

As a contrast to the imperishable nature of these monuments, all that now remains of the once prosperous city of Heliopolis is the single obelisk, standing in the fields solitary and alone. Beyond are the palm-groves of Esbet-en-Nahla and Marg, a refreshing variation of subject after so much sand and dust, and in which the native life of the village and its picturesque cemetery are valuable incidents.

I cannot close my review of Cairo and its neighbourhood without saying that with one exception, when, at the village of Kafrah below the Pyramids, a stone was thrown at my picture, I have never while working experienced anything in the way of rudeness or molestation at the hands of the native. On the other hand, their kindness has often been great, as I have shown. Let me add in conclusion two other instances of this.

I have frequently been at work the whole day long among the dusty tombs of the Khalifs, around which are built the little houses of the quarrymen and labourers from Cairo. Several times has one or other of these

MASTABA BELOW THE SECOND PYRAMID



poor people prepared some light repast and very deferentially invited me to partake of it, which I have usually done ; and in Cairo itself, while engaged upon a mosque interior, the Imam has cleared out a cupboard of books, etc., in order that I might leave my materials there, and so saved me the trouble of constantly carrying them backwards and forwards.

CHAPTER VI

THE NILE

No other river, probably, presents so many curious features, or is environed with so much romantic suggestion, as this remarkable stream, which, rising in Lake Victoria Nyanza, in the course of its 3000 miles traverses half the length of Africa. Tributaries from the Bahr-el-Ghazal on the west, and the river Sobat rising in the mountains south of Abyssinia, combine to form the even-flowing main stream called the "Bahr-el-Abiad" or White Nile. So far practically unnavigable, it is only upon its junction at Khartūm with the "Bahr-el-Azrak," or Blue Nile, that the river becomes that great waterway which from the earliest times has been a busy highway for the commerce of the world.

We may assume that the ancient Egyptian knew little of the source of the majestic stream which, appearing from out of a dim unknown, flowed uninterruptedly and without tributaries through the land, and by its periodic and regular inundations brought fertility and wealth to the whole country.

It is easy to understand the veneration with which the Nile was regarded by the ancients. To

superstitious minds its annual overflow must have appeared to be of a somewhat supernatural character, and it is not surprising that the rising of its waters should have been the signal for a series of religious and festal ceremonies, or that the early Egyptians should have included it among their numerous deities.

There is something peculiarly impressive in the silent flow of the noble river, a feeling of dignity and repose, and a quiet beauty not to be appreciated in a moment. Few holiday resorts combine so much of historic glamour and present-day interest, and the "Nile trip" is rightly regarded as one of the greatest attractions Egypt has to offer the tourist.

In former days the journey to the Cataracts was the privilege of the few, whose ample means and leisure enabled them to enjoy its scenery in a manner peculiarly in sympathy with its character and traditions. The slow-sailing "dahabiyeh" was not incongruous with the lotus-age of Egypt, while the crocodile and sacred ibis recognised little difference between the stately Nile yacht and the aforetime sacred barges of the priests.

To-day a difference is noticeable. The advent of steam traffic on the Nile has not only driven the crocodile to more secluded waters, but with them has also disappeared much of the old glamour of the stream. Everything is more or less vulgarised, and, though the beauty of its scenery and majestic monuments remains practically the same, a subtle change has overcome the spirit of the scene.

Egypt

Nowadays fleets of well-appointed steamers rush tourists to and from the Cataracts, and travellers of the early 'sixties would be amazed by the regularity, rapidity, and cheapness with which the formerly adventurous voyage can now be accomplished, while the recent railway extensions have brought Khartūm itself within a comparatively few hours of Cairo. Dinners and dances on the decks of electrically illuminated steamers have supplanted the quiet enjoyment of the moonlit river gliding beneath your dahabiyeh. Huge hotels at Luxor and Assuan attract the gayest from Cairo, and repeat beneath the shadow of the world's most historic ruins the *blasé* life of London or Paris. As with the people frequenting it, so also the native inhabitants of the Nile banks have undergone a change, and for the worse ; for in place of the primitive, simple-minded people of the long ago, we have a populace whose clamouring for "backsheesh" destroys much of the pleasure of the trip, and whose former industry and courtesy are largely undermined by the comparative wealth annually extorted from Cook's tourists, which enables it to spend a considerable portion of each year in demoralising idleness.

My own experience is, that with few exceptions courtesy may hardly be looked for in Upper Egypt ; the slightest service, necessary or otherwise, demands its fee, travellers being simply regarded as an annual harvest to be reaped to its utmost possibility.

On the other hand, the greatly improved facilities for travelling have enabled many thoughtful people to

enjoy a trip previously only within the reach of the well-to-do, and, all modern "improvement" notwithstanding, the journey up the Nile still is, and must always remain, one of the most beautiful and fascinating the world affords.

The ostensible object of the journey is of course the inspection of the temples. Few passengers, however, are versed in hieroglyphics, and the full enjoyment of the antiquities is only possible to the Egyptologist. I rather suspect that were the truth known, most of the Nile visitors are secretly bored, and only "do" these sights under moral compulsion. As a matter of fact, with the single exception of Philæ, none of the temples as they appear to-day are intrinsically beautiful, and in most cases are so surrounded and smothered by squalid dwellings and accumulated débris as to prohibit any distant or general view from which they might be perhaps more generally pictorial.

Karnak is sufficiently free from such obstruction and impresses by its vastness; while from the river, Kom Ombos and Luxor are well seen, but usually fail as pictures, unless under the magic influence of some effect of light and air.

The real charm which draws people to the river is undoubtedly its own beauty, and the interest of the life it supports.

The variety of scene is surprising; and no matter how often the trip to the Cataracts is made, each successive journey discovers some new feature, or presents familiar scenes under different conditions

which entirely alter their character. I have been greatly struck by this, and it is really difficult to say that you *know* the Nile, so varying are its moods.

How unlike its morning aspect does any given spot appear at sunset! and the sudden change of wind from north to south will immediately effect a complete change in the appearance of your surroundings. Early mists, still water, changing light or wind, each in turn transforms an individual scene into as many different pictures. Added to this is the difference in your point of view consequent upon the rising and falling of its water-level, the varying incident of river-life, and the ever-changing character-studies the banks afford.

It is not my object, however, to enter upon any detailed description of the river, but rather to point out a few features which strike me as interesting, and typical of the journey as a whole.

Almost immediately on leaving Cairo a new country unfolds itself. The Mokattam Hills and pearly-tinted Tūra range appear very different when seen from the water-level, and, after passing the palm-groves of Bedrachên and the various groups of pyramids which lie beyond, all that is already familiar is left behind, and Ayat marks the beginning of what is new to the *voyageur*.

Here, and for a considerable distance to the south, the hills on either side have fallen away, and interest is confined to the river itself and its high mud-banks. But how very interesting it is! It is blowing freshly from the east, and little clouds slightly wind-torn cast their fleeting shadows upon growing corn and muddy water.

A BREEZY DAY AT AYAT

How rich in colour the water is, each wavelet catching a little of reflected blue which gives a sparkle to its otherwise chocolate-coloured mass! A boat with flapping sail is landing passengers and goods on a sandbank, or, running well with the wind, is throwing off a creamy cataract from its high-pointed bow. See the shape of the sails as they bend to the wind, and the gleam of sunlight upon the bellying canvas, as with quick tacks the boat follows the tortuous channel of the river. Between the masts you will notice a short post from which hangs a brown canvas bag. This contains the provisions of the crew, and is placed there in the sight of all so that no one can indulge in a surreptitious meal.

Here and there between places of importance a ferry-boat crosses with its freight of passengers or live stock, while round the distant bend in the river appears a group of vessels, with sails "goosewinged," running before the wind like a flight of sea-birds.

On the banks, silhouetted against the sky, country-folk pass from village to village driving camels and donkeys laden with produce or building material, while the handsome bullock and patient "gamoos"[1] tethered in the fields, or turning the water-wheels, serve in turn to vary the life of the scene. Half-naked men laboriously working at the "shadoofs" lift irrigating water for the fields; and women and children are as usual occupied in laundry-work at the water's edge, or, statuesquely erect, bear away their "balass" of water gracefully poised upon their heads.

[1] Buffalo.

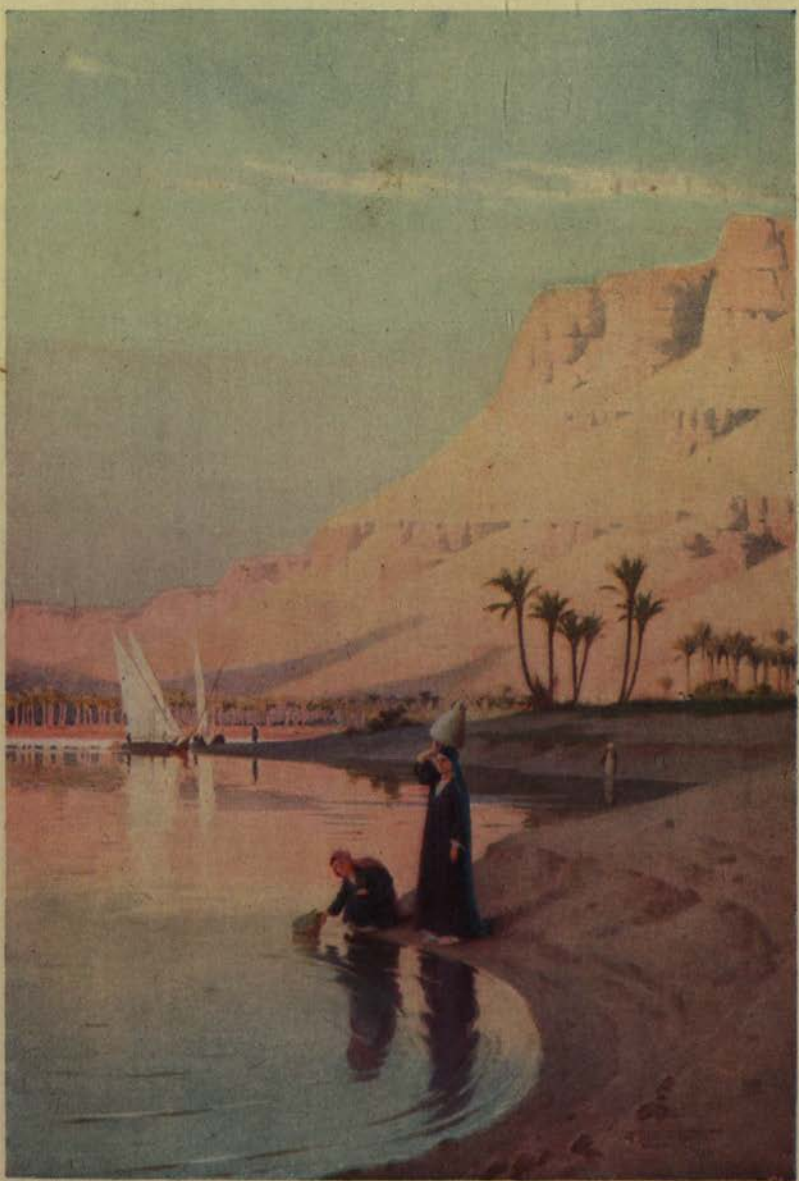
Few probably of the many pictures the banks afford are more charming than the frequent village watering-places. Here morning and evening congregate the girls and women of the district, some for the purpose of drawing water, others to attend to the domestic washing, but one and all prepared for the full enjoyment of a gossip.

Watch them as they come and go. A woman appears on the bank, her empty water-pot carried sideways on her head, and, slowly and deliberately, she descends the steep path to the water's edge. Laying down her "balass," she will gather her trailing garments around her, and squatting upon her heels watch your steamer pass, or await the arrival of a companion.

One by one the women come, each in turn sitting down to discuss family matters or the latest scandal, preparatory to setting about her occupation. Presently one of them rises, and, throwing her head-scarf back, tucks her skirts between her legs and wades a few steps into the stream. First scrubbing the outside of her water-jar, she will then fill it, and, having with difficulty carried it ashore, rest a while before preparing to return.

Meanwhile young girls are engaged in scouring out copper cooking-pots or idly paddling in the water. Here too are the belles of the village, frequently pretty, but invariably splendidly formed, and adorned by hands and feet of the most beautiful shape and proportion. Every action is graceful, and the beauty of their figures is enhanced by the almost classic folds of their partly clinging draperies. Before departure, the costume is

GIBEL KASR-ES-SAAD



arranged and the head-dress adjusted with true feminine instinct, and then, in turn assisting each other in raising their heavy loads into position, the steep bank is climbed and they disappear from view over its crest.

The stately carriage of these women is most attractive, due no doubt to unconfining garments and the habit of bearing heavy weights on their heads. Their sense of balance also is remarkable, as the following instances will show. A girl had filled a kerosene tin with water, and placing it on her head found it was too heavy for her. With a quick jerk of the head she cleverly spilled a portion of her load, the water falling clear of her garments, and, without touching it with her hands, the equipoise of the tin was maintained. Another, spying on the ground a rose, discarded by some traveller, picked it up with her toes, and though similarly laden succeeded in passing it to her hand.

Every bit of the river has its interest, and should you get tired of looking an hour's doze in the sunshine to the tune of rippling water is not ill-spent.

Lethargy is quickly dispelled, however, on nearing a landing-place. The steamer's whistle is the signal for all the townspeople to congregate on the stage, and the air is filled by a babel of sound in which the word "backsheesh" is predominant. Formerly it was the custom to provide yourself with a large bag of millièmes for these occasions; and small though the value of the coin was, it had a certain power of purchase, and was often a sufficient gratuity for slight service. Nowadays, through the thoughtless

extravagance of tourists, even *beggars* will hardly thank you for them, and the substitution of piastres instead of millièmes as "backsheesh" has added appreciably to the incidental expenses of the trip. When it is considered that the daily wage of the majority of these people does not exceed two or three piastres, it will be readily understood how disproportionate and bad in its influence is any excessive dispensing of "largesse" by travellers.

At many of these landing-places interesting curios are to be bought: inlaid walking-sticks and pottery, ornamental baskets and dish-covers made from coloured grasses plaited in good designs, and the inevitable Egyptian "antikas." Stuffed animals and horns are to be avoided, but some really beautiful fabrics are to be had, and occasionally a good coin or ornament in metal-work.

What a lively ten minutes it is for the would-be purchaser, whose bargaining must be carried on in pigeon-English and under stress of time! It is all very amusing, and the final scramble in the mud for the odd coins thrown ashore as the steamer leaves is really most laughable.

These stoppages, with their attendant noise and bustle, form excellent foils to the easy-going life of your steamer, and perhaps serve to increase the delight with which the traveller revels in the constantly varying beauty of the mountains on the eastern side.

Take for instance the flat-topped range of Feshun or the castellated bluffs of Gibel Kasr-es-Saad. Notice

TEL-EL-AMARNA, ON THE UPPER NILE

the slow changing of their colouration as the light varies. Clear and sharp against the blue sky at mid-day, every serration and stratification is clearly defined. Each horizontal layer holds a little drift-sand or disintegrated rock which adds to the range of local colour. The glittering high lights relieve themselves against the warm-tinted mass, which is again broken by the purple-blue shadows of projections. The day passes, and the declining sun warms the colour of the whole, losing at the same time much of the sharp detail of mid-day, while long-drawn reflections repeat the ruddy-tinted hills in a limpid mirror of *eau-du-Nil.*

Sunset comes, and the shaded banks, crested with verdure, are relieved strongly by the now glowing mass of rock beyond, against which idle sails, hanging in graceful folds from the spars, appear a delicate violet. The boats'-crews, plying crookedly-built sweeps with intermittent stroke, propel their vessels sleepily to the accompaniment of the "darabooka"[1] and the weird singing of a supercargo. Otherwise the river is silent, and pelican and ibis fish undisturbed in the shallows, or contentedly plume themselves on the slowly appearing mud-banks.

At the same time the purple earth-shadow climbs the mellow eastern sky, until on the final disappearance of the sun begins the most wonderful transfiguration of all. For a short time everything is grey against the sky beyond, but after an interval of twenty minutes or so a *second* glow slowly appears upon the hills, and,

[1] Tom-tom.

gradually growing in intensity, eventually illuminates everything in a rosy light, almost as brilliant as the sun itself, but more ethereal and mysterious. This again gives place to the purple mistiness of night, or the ghostly whiteness of the moonshine.

Effects and scenes such as these constitute what people come to see, and probably nowhere but in the Nile valley is such a succession of wonders. Words and pictures equally fail to describe adequately such beauty; it must be seen to be fully appreciated.

Your journey, however, does not entirely consist of nature-poems, such as I have attempted to describe. The onward march of civilisation has left its impress on the Nile, and the necessities of industrial development and the restless energy of commercial enterprise make their influence felt here as elsewhere in Egypt. Smoking steam-tugs go spluttering by, towing behind them groups of coal-laden barges bound for the molasses-reeking sugar factories of Maghagha or Farshūt, whose black smoke is continually being belched over the river. Steam turbines are replacing the picturesque "sakkia," while stone embankment or railway bridge go far to spoil reaches of the river otherwise beautiful.

Still, these improvements are inevitable, and testify to the material prosperity of the country, and after all they are not sufficiently numerous to seriously threaten the beauty of the river. On the other hand, I notice that the boats have more colour about them than formerly; their bows and rudders are nearly

A NILE AFTERGLOW

always painted in gay tints, and the dark stripe now so noticeable in the sails is quite a recent addition, and certainly enhances their effect. Possibly this exuberance is one of the results of increased prosperity, due perhaps in some degree to the very factories we are all so ready to abuse.

Many of the towns and villages on the Upper Nile are picturesque, and the white-washed houses and tall minarets of Sohag, Girgeh, and Abu Tig are pleasant features in the landscape. Assiūt also, the capital of Upper Egypt, is a large and in some respects a handsome town, splendidly situated on a bend of the river, well surrounded by trees and gardens, and backed by the high cliffs of the Libyan Desert, which here approach to within a short distance of the river.

Every mile of your journey has its own particular interest. Here is a herd of buffaloes wallowing in the river, and enjoying a brief respite from the scorching sun and irritating fly. They are good swimmers, also, as I noticed the other day, when a small boy brought his "gamoos" down to water. Instead of returning to the controlling hand of the lad, the buffalo struck off down-stream at a pace with which the distracted youngster on the bank could not keep up. What the end of the race was, I was not able to ascertain.

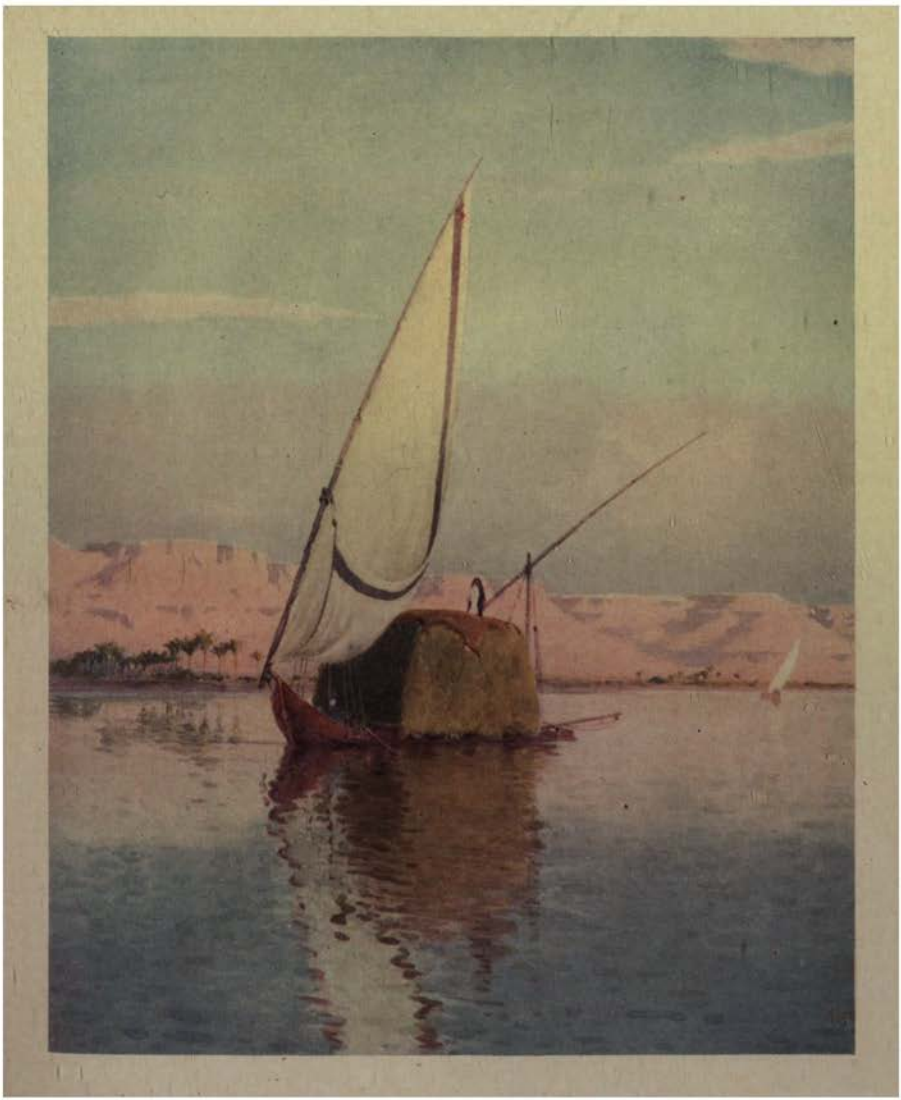
Then comes your first temple, Dendera; and the excitement of your first excursion. The bank is crowded by donkeys and their drivers, each proclaiming

the merits of his beast and claiming your patronage. On landing you are surrounded, and all the efforts of the local policeman (who certainly does not spare the rod) fail to protect the traveller from the pushing and pulling of the donkey-boys, as each one strives by main force to get you on to the back of his beast. Nothing is of any use but a little of the vernacular, and it is astonishing how amenable they become on being addressed in their own language. You are then permitted to select your donkey and mount in peace, and are for the rest of the day spoken of as "the Pasha" or "the Bey"; and the very boy or man who shortly before was giving you the maximum of annoyance, now scornfully reproves the passing mendicant with, "Be quiet, you fool, don't you know the Bey is an Egyptian and speaks Arabic!"

The ride from Keneh to the ruins of Dendera is very pleasant, the road lying entirely across fields and being good enough for a gallop, and I have usually found my donkey here one of excellent paces.

In the field as you pass the cattle are grazing attended by good-looking boys and girls, while stark-naked urchins, wound round with ropes of plaited grass and flowers, perform a kind of morris-dance for your edification. The country-people here are polite, and greet you respectfully with "Naharak said!" (May your day be happy!); or, on your departure, the courteous salutation, "Roh-es-salaam!" (Go in peace!), to which you respond, "Ma salaami" (With my blessing).

A TIBBIN BOAT ON THE NILE



The temple itself is half hidden among mud-heaps, all that remains of the Roman buildings which once surrounded it, and is probably the latest temple to be built in Egypt, dating only two thousand years back. It is in wonderful preservation, and the massive dignity of its interior is very impressive, and in its architecture and plan, as well as in its decoration by hieroglyphic inscription, displays all the chief characteristics of the Pharaohnic period.

The Nile is a river of contrasts no less than of harmonies. On one side, mud-banks and cultivation are opposed to precipitous cliffs which rise abruptly from the water's edge a thousand feet into the air. Every geological feature is plainly shown in their perpendicular sides, the regular stratifications being broken here and there by some earthquake "fault" or a rock-hewn tomb. Close in to the rocks lie boats, dwarfed into insignificance by the tremendous mass above them, while the blue-clad quarrymen, toiling laboriously, load them with their cargoes of dazzling white. Eagles soar about the cliffs and are lost to sight before the top is reached, and along the narrow strip of shingle-beach a small boy and his black flock of goats scramble warily in search of pasture. The whole is repeated in the water—a mass of shimmering, glittering light which almost blinds the beholder.

In mid-stream bustling steamers and quick-sailing "giassas" steer their course between lazily drifting "tibbin" boats, while others again from Guergeh or Sohag, heavily laden with a pyramid of water-pots, lie

athwart the stream which bears them slowly to their northern markets.

No less interesting are the mud-banks themselves, crowned with the fresh green of the young Indian-corn crop. You will notice how each successive fall of the water cuts the steep sides into terraces, from the face of which slabs of alluvial mud constantly break off like basaltic rock, and are swept away in the stream. Each fresh terrace as it is formed is brought under cultivation by the industrious farmer, who plants on its narrow area onions, beans, and other vegetables.

In mid-stream, before the water has entirely left it, every mud-bank is marked out with stakes, and these claims will presently be sown with water-melon and cucumber, every inch of arable soil being utilised to its utmost possibility.

From the terraces of the bank you may see fishermen throwing their hand-nets. The nets are circular, about twelve feet in diameter, with a line attached to the centre. The fisherman lays his net in folds upon both arms, and with a dexterous swing of the body throws it over the water, upon which it falls in a perfect circle. The outer edge is weighted and falls slowly to the bottom, enclosing whatever fish may happen there in its descent. The fish caught in this way are usually small, though the Nile contains many of great size which are sometimes caught by line.

I noticed one day a curious episode in this connection. As the fisher cast his net, a kingfisher, poised

overhead, immediately dived and secured a fish, and repeated this with every cast. I watched the pair for some time with amusement, and I really think that the bird caught more than the fisherman, in spite of his superior appliances.

Very frequently may be seen perched high up on the bank native boats in course of construction or repair. Seeing them out of water gives one a better idea of their proportions. The sweep of the high bow is really beautiful, as also the model of the hull itself. It always strikes me as curious that, though no building-plan is used and the workmen appear to construct their vessel by rule of thumb, still in the whole length of the river the model of each class of boat is identical. It is worth while watching the boat-builder at work, and one can only wonder that so much beauty of line and proportion can be got out of the scraps of wood and twisted timbers of which they are built. It may be noticed also that invariably they are "hogbacked," that is, that the keel, instead of being straight, inclines upwards from each end of the boat so that it is lost amidships. The reason for this is, that while the depth of keel at bow and stern gives the vessel sufficient hold on the water for sailing purposes, should it strike a bank the cut-water will easily carry through, and by reason of its flat bottom and shallower draught amidship the whole body of the boat will "jump" the obstruction. The high lateen sail also is the result of experience and local necessity; for were European

sails used, vessels would frequently be "blanketed" by the high banks and palm-groves, whereas the enormous height of the lateen sail overtops both trees and buildings, and enables it to catch the breeze even during the lowest period of the river.

During flood-time all these vessels, now high and dry, will be floated off the banks, and make their first entry into the life of the river, bedecked with coloured flags on which are embroidered the names of "Allah," "Mahomet," "Hassan wa Hussên," etc. This same flood, however, will often carry away large portions of the banks, and even partially destroy the village built upon it. A great deal of damage is done in this way, and must entail a heavy loss upon the villagers. Nowadays spurs of stone are being built at frequent intervals, so as to turn the main current into mid-stream and so preserve the banks, while those who have suffered loss in this way have the first claim upon whatever land may be deposited on the opposite side or below them.

Each year the course of the Nile changes, and as the river falls the new channels have to be discovered afresh. This makes navigation difficult, and it requires a practised eye to tell by the nature of the ripple where is deep water and where a shoal. Often, and particularly in a breeze, the water cannot well be told in this way, and the "midra," or sounding pole, has to be brought into play, and with the cry of "Ali" (high, or shallow) engines are stopped and a new course tried.

Groundings, however, are very frequent, and entail hard work upon the crew. The anchor is sent out on a boat, and while the winch is working on the hawser the hands exert themselves to the utmost in their efforts to shove the steamer off with poles. Sometimes hours are occupied in the work, the crew supporting each other with cries of "O Allah!" "Work, Mohammed!' etc., and a doggerel chant in which many English words appear, until the joyful shout of "Mashi!" (She moves!) proclaims your vessel once more afloat and soon to continue her voyage to the Cataract.

The prevailing wind on the Nile is from the north, a fortunate provision of nature which enables boats to sail against a stream which afterwards, should the wind be contrary, is strong enough to drift them back again. A curious fact also may here be noticed, and that is, that there is almost always *some* breeze on the water, even though a short distance away from the banks the air is still; and the traveller may often see boats briskly sailing on the river a mile away, while he perhaps is sweltering in a hot and stagnant air. This circumstance should always be remembered by travellers. Nothing is more dangerous than, after some hot excursion on land, to continue the journey on the water without protection of some kind from the cooler air. This is especially the case on the downward journey, when your steamer, probably travelling at the rate of ten or twelve knots, is driving into a north wind of equal velocity. Then, if you are

wise, and would avoid chills and their evil consequences, you will seek some warm corner of the boat, or look out your travelling rugs and overcoats.

Though generally quiescent, the Nile, like all sunny characters, has its moments of anger, when for brief periods passivity gives place to storm. During the months of March and April the "khamsīn"[1] winds are prevalent. Blowing from the south-west and having their origin in the heart of Africa, these hot winds sweep across hundreds of miles of desert, gathering volume as they travel and enveloping all nature in a veil of whirling drift-sand, occasionally sufficiently dense to obscure the sun. Then, lashed into fury by the wind, the Nile becomes a dangerous river for small boats, which are sometimes wrecked, while even large steamers may be driven out of their course and stranded. Though, as the name implies, the "khamsīn" winds cover a period of approximately fifty days, they are intermittent in their energy; two or three days of wind being succeeded by an equal period of beautifully fine weather.

From the north-west also comes a strong wind which sometimes carries dust with it, though in this case it never lasts long, and is frequently followed by a heavy shower of rain. A rather curious instance occurred some few years ago during a gymkhana at the Pyramids. While the sports were in full swing, a gathering gloom to the north-west attracted the attention of some, and evidently betokened a shower.

[1] Meaning fifty.

NORTH WIND ON THE UPPER NILE

Approaching with great rapidity, it was soon apparent that a cloud of sand surmounted by heavy rain-clouds was rushing before a squall of wind. The weather-wise immediately left the stand and sought shelter in the stables close by; but before all present realised the danger, or could effect a retreat, the storm broke upon us in a blinding drift of sand, almost immediately followed by a downpour of rain. On account of the dense mass of dust in the air the rain reached the ground in the form of liquid mud, which, while causing the usual discomfort incidental to a wetting, was also, I am afraid, responsible for the ruination of many gay frocks and feathers.

To the student of its monuments, the special interest of the Nile begins when, after a journey of 450 miles, Luxor is reached. Here the mountains on either side fall away, leaving a large alluvial plain, upon which, on both sides of the river, formerly stood the hundred-gated Thebes, once the centre of religious influence in Upper Egypt, and unquestionably the largest and most magnificent of its cities.

The ancient city has disappeared, and we can now form no idea of its plan or general appearance; but its ruined temples, the extent and grandeur of which impress the visitor strongly, are monuments to its former greatness and a record of the history of those ancient days.

Every epoch is represented. Temples of Seti and Rameses have within them Coptic church and Moslem mosque, while all that remains of the Roman occupa-

tion of Egypt is represented by the crumbling débris which partially cover magnificent buildings erected a thousand years before their advent in the country.

So much of antiquity is here, that the ordinary person, comfortably settled in an up-to-date hotel, and surrounded by a world of Western fashion, may well be perplexed by such an incongruity of dates; and it is difficult at first to realise that Joseph and his brethren may possibly have witnessed the commencement of many of these piles, or that their unhappy descendants may as slaves have toiled in their completion. The mind becomes bewildered, and, to those who are unversed in hieroglyphics or the ancient history of the land, interest in the monuments must be largely pictorial.

Still, even to the lay mind many characteristic features of design and decoration must appeal. No one who has seen the colonnade at Luxor could fail to appreciate the grandeur of its columns or the splendid boldness of the capitals. The lofty obelisk, and granite statue of Rameses II., are but a foretaste of that greatness of idea which culminates in the magnificence of Karnak or the stupendous dignity of the Colossi.

No expert knowledge is necessary for the appreciation of Karnak. It immediately fascinates the visitor, whose wonder grows as he wanders through its ruined halls, and vainly attempts to picture it as it once was, and repeople its courts with the stately pageantry of its religious processions.

Seen by moonlight when the bare facts of its absolute desolation are softened, it is indescribably weird and mysterious. Here at any rate is one temple which lends itself to poetic treatment. In all directions there are pictures : the great pylon glowing in the setting sun, the quiet repose of the sacred lake, or the majestic aisles of the great hall, each is a subject which permits of varied treatment. Surrounding the ruins are palm-groves, and human interest is picturesquely added in the person of the native goatherd or Arab watchman, who with long staff or gun patrols the precincts.

Between Luxor and Karnak is the well-known avenue of sphinxes. Behind it to the east is another, half hidden among the palm-trees, leading to a pylon now in ruins. At its base, standing upon a pedestal of granite, is a *foot*, well sculptured and of colossal proportions. Not much in itself, perhaps, but how imposing must have been the figure, of which nothing else now remains but the scattered fragments of stone which are piled high around its base ! Similarly the enormous columns of the great hall, the lofty obelisks, and the towering masses of the pylons inspire in the beholder a feeling of reverential wonder at the greatness of the minds which thought on such a scale.

The dominant feeling with any one who explores these ruins is the *bigness* of it all. Big, not only in its conception, but in the overcoming of seemingly insurmountable difficulties of construction. Sixty feet in the air the columns are supporting architraves formed of enormous blocks of stone, each weighing perhaps twenty

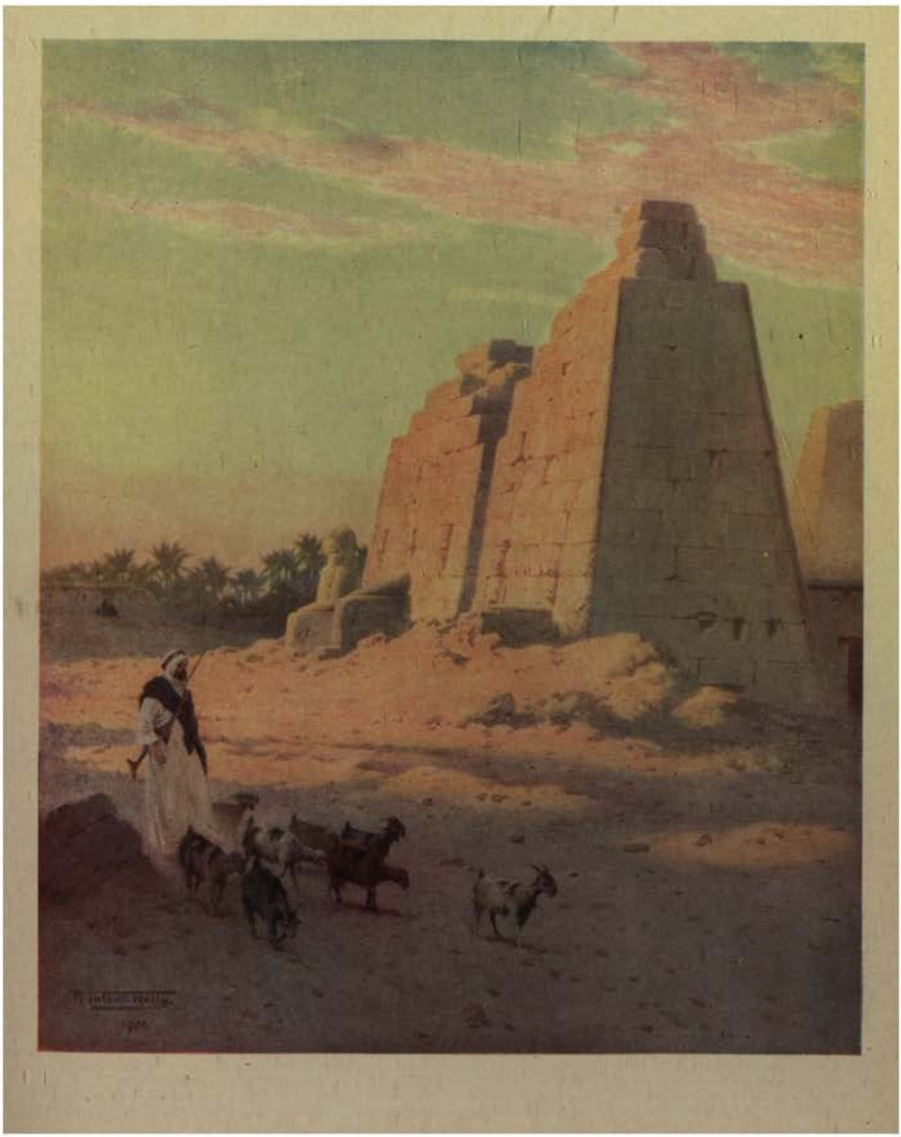
or thirty tons, but so accurately adjusted to their position as to require no cement or metal ties. How was it done? And what difficulties must have surrounded the transport from Assuan, a hundred and forty miles away, of the monolith which stands one hundred and five feet in height! It is wonderful, and I believe I am correct in stating that no solution of this problem of construction is to be found in either hieroglyphic or papyrus.

Karnak has unfortunately been obliged to submit to the restoring hand of the engineer, and much of the wildness which up to a year or two ago characterised the temple and its surroundings has given place to modern regulation. Iron gates and railings limit the former freedom of access. Further excavation has robbed the pylon of much of its mystery, and interposed a deep wall and ditch between it and the surrounding sand. Saddest of all, the leaning column and falling masonry of the temple itself have been re-erected and the floor made good with concrete. All this has no doubt been necessary in the interests of Egyptology, but it has gone far to rob the ruins of much of their romance and suggestion.

Across the river are the Theban Hills, a striking background to Medinet Habu and the Ramasseum. Seen in the early morning, when the sunrise gilds their terraced sides and dissipates the mists which hang on the water, it is one of the most beautiful pictures on the river.

Unlike Karnak, Medinet Habu is in a fine state of

PYLON AT KARNAK



preservation, and gives a very perfect idea of what the temple must have been in its original glory, though most of the colouration has gone from the columns and ceilings. Here, and in the Ramasseum, is a new feature in the use of sculptured figures as supporting columns, an idea more fully developed in the Greek Caryatides at Athens; and it would be interesting to trace the influence which in other ways the old Egyptian art must have had upon the Greek.

Close to the Ramasseum, prostrate and broken, is another of those mighty portrait-statues so frequent in Egypt. This one is sixty feet high, and originally monolithic. Formed of hard grit-stone, it is finely sculptured; and though not always apparent to the eye, by passing the hand over the shoulder or knee, etc., little subtleties of modelling are detected, and show that the artist who made it had some knowledge at least of interior anatomy.

Most imposing of all the monuments here, however, are the Colossi. Standing alone among the cornfields, or surrounded by the Nile at flood-time, they are from any point of view, and under any effect of light, the embodiment of dignified repose, and form fitting monuments to the greatness of their creator.

All these monuments should be separately studied by the aid of expert knowledge. Our concern is more with their pictorial aspect, though a few characteristic features may be noticed in passing. One striking peculiarity is the sloping outer walls of the temple or pylon, plainly serving the purpose, as it no doubt

is the origin, of the buttress of later architecture. This form lends to the buildings a sense of strength and solidity which is very impressive; and, as though to counteract the effect of weight in their structure, almost invariably you will find an impost inserted between the capital and architrave which gives a touch of lightness which is valuable. Where any procession of pylons or gates occurs, it will be noticed that each successive doorway is increasingly larger and more ornate, until the magnificently enriched interior courts of the temple itself are reached. Thus, those approaching the shrine would experience an ever-growing feeling of wonder and admiration; and on returning, the diminishing proportions, aided by perspective, could not fail to impress the beholder with a sense of distance and immensity.

Dignity and repose characterise all these monuments, and whether it be the Sphinx at Gizeh, or a sculptured Rameses at Thebes, each expresses the same idea of omniscience and immutability, to which the everlasting nature of pyramid or temple-building forms a fitting complement. To my mind, the evident intention that these monuments should last for ever suggests more of the character of the builders than any written record. The deeply inscribed hieroglyphics are often somewhat boastful, and reveal far less of majesty than the massive walls which bear them, and sculptures which attribute to the king almost divine power are less real and impressive than the pride which would not suffer their bodies to decay.

In decoration, as in structure, the art of the ancient Egyptian is distinctive. The hieroglyphs of the temples and delicately relieved mural carvings of the tombs at Sakkara are peculiar to this country and epoch, and it is remarkable that, though as "art" somewhat archaic, in no instance is truth to nature contradicted. Animal action, for instance, is always correctly represented, and the story told with directness and force; and although all such depictions followed a manner which might be styled convention, the Egyptian artist saw nature with a simple truthfulness which avoided those errors of anatomy and motion which characterise so much of mediæval art, and are only now slowly succumbing to greater knowledge.

Undoubtedly the ancient Egyptians were a people of great scientific attainment; and apart from the lost mechanical methods which enabled them to carry out their stupendous works, many problems remain unsolved. The texture of the mummy-cloths cannot be copied by modern weavers; and who knows the composition of the pigments employed in the decorations of the rock-tombs? pigments as fresh to-day as when applied 3000 years ago! And how again were the interior chambers of the temple illuminated? Many of these chambers are entirely beyond the reach of daylight, so that artificial light must have been constantly employed. Yet there is no sign of lamp or sconce, or trace of smoke upon the walls! These are some questions upon which no light has been thrown by papyrus or hieroglyph, and upon which we can only

speculate. The art of their jewellers and stone-carvers still excites wonder and admiration; and in astronomy, letters, or art, Egypt was pre-eminent among the nations, and counted among its sciences many which have been lost to the world, or maybe are only now being rediscovered. Surely among what is picturesque in Egypt may be included the romance attaching to this lost Atlantis of knowledge.

Reverting to Egypt of to-day, we find little interest in Luxor itself, especially since the market, formerly in the centre of the town, has been removed to a more distant site enclosed in high iron railings, and roofed where necessary with corrugated iron! All very prosaic, but better for the people, and certainly adding considerably to the comfort of the town itself.

The surrounding country is fresh and fertile, and a good donkey-ride through the farm-land is a refreshing relaxation after the fatigue of sightseeing, or the exhausting excursion to the Tomb of the Kings.

Turning to the right before reaching Karnak, the road, or "kūbri"[1] as it is here called, leads through crop- and pasture-land to the desert beyond. Here the usual phases of rural life are in full swing: the "rai-el-bahīm" and his mixed herd loom through the dust they cause; country-people drive their produce-laden beasts to the market; and in the fields youngsters tend the tethered cattle or roaming flock, and shyly beg a "backsheesh" as you pass.

[1] Bridge, probably so called because the raised roadway would be surrounded by the annual overflow.

Returning to Luxor, you may ride along the banks of a small "khalig" or canal, full during high Nile but usually dry after December. This is well shaded by sycamore and tamarisk trees, and produces a great variety of water-plants, and in one of the groves is a very beautiful "sakkia" or water-wheel. Idle for most of the year, the flood brings it into activity again, and adds its groaning to the other sounds of field life. My servant volunteered the following explanation of the perpetual "sighing of the sakkia." It is said that Alexander the Great had asses' ears, a fact of which none but his barber was aware. Unable at length to maintain the horrible secret, the barber in order to relieve his soul went into the fields and whispered the fact to a sakkia, and ever since they continue to cry mournfully to each other, "Alexander has ears!" "Alexander has ears!"

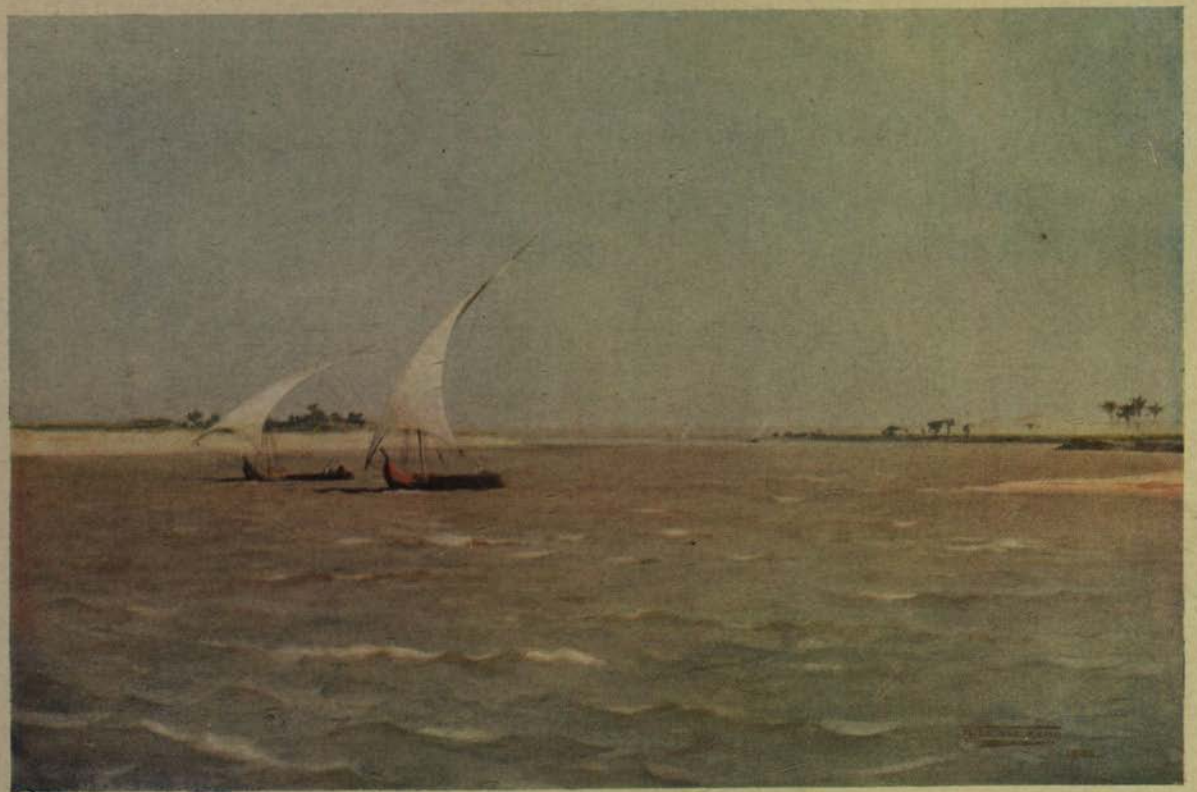
Among other trees you will see here for the first time the dôm-palm, which I think I am right in saying does not flourish to the north of Luxor; and from here onwards to Assuan the castor-oil plant is grown as a regular crop.

Quite apart from its historic interest Luxor is quite a pleasant place to stay in, and the people themselves are quiet and agreeable, though of course keenly alive to the chance of a "tip." A very excellent example was set them by the late British consular agent, Achmed Effendi Ayyad, who was always most attentive to strangers. Some years ago he entertained my wife and myself to dinner. Twelve

of us (of whom my wife was the only lady) sat down to an excellent meal served on a large round table. A good bottle of claret was provided for us, but otherwise the dishes were all Egyptian, and eaten with the hands in the orthodox manner, each diner vying with the other in picking out tit-bits for my wife, which were offered with the most graceful courtesy. Her ready acceptance of the position gave great delight to the other guests, while our host presented her on leaving with several curios of value. Achmed Effendi has passed to his eternal home, but his brother, Said Mustapha, whom I saw a short time ago, has succeeded to the office, and worthily maintains the tradition of hospitality associated with the name of Ayyad.

To those in search of such mementoes, many good curios can be picked up here at moderate cost, either from a dragoman (if you *know* "antikas"), or should you not feel confident in your own judgment, the porter at Pagnon's Hotel usually has a collection from which to select, and his information and advice may be relied upon. The trade in spurious curios is very general, and it is surprising to what trouble and expense the native will occasionally put himself in their manufacture. There is a rare gold coin much sought for but rarely to be had, which in weight is equal to five English sovereigns, though of course of much greater value. A gentleman was offered what appeared to be a genuine specimen for the relatively paltry sum of £7, a fact which made him suspicious of its genuineness. On testing, it proved to be of gold

A SILVERY DAY ON THE NILE



THE COLOSSI OF THEBES—MOONRISE

and correct in weight, but was eventually proved to be a forgery. It transpired that the native had actually melted five sovereigns, and cast the imitation in a mould made from a genuine coin in his possession.

A short distance above Luxor is the village of Esneh. The landing-place is picturesque; white-washed houses crown the bank, which is fringed by a row of lebbek-trees. Under the trees sit several public letter-writers, who, like the rest of its inhabitants, proffer their services as guides. The temple, which lies in the centre and entirely *beneath* the town, is reached by descending a flight of steps; but except for the fact that being on a level with the capitals you are better able to study their carvings and illuminations, there is little of special interest in the small portion opened out. Further excavation would entail the demolition of much of the best property of the village, and is not likely to be attempted for a long time to come. Disappointing though the temple is, the market-place is well worth seeing, and many odd corners of its bazaar are quaintly pictorial. A great feature of the place is its mosque, built of coloured bricks, set in patterns, with tile ornamentation of the doorway. The upper stages of minaret are interesting in form, and finished in the usual white plaster-work. Altogether the mosque is unusual, and the only one of the kind I have seen in Egypt.

Edfu, which is soon reached, is a more important item in your journey, its temple being the most perfect in preservation, and in many respects the most

remarkable in Egypt. It is comparatively recent in point of date, having been completed so lately as 57 B.C., and has many points of resemblance to Dendera. Two special features distinguish it from others. Its pylons are of unusual height, rising 112 feet above ground, and are covered by carved depictions of battle scenes. From the top of the pylons a very striking view is to be had which repays the effort of climbing. Here, by the way, it may be mentioned that the ascending galleries by which the roof of the temple or upper stories of the towers are reached are inclined planes simply, and not staircases, and mounting is therefore a gradual and easy process. Another special feature of Edfu is the high boundary-wall entirely enclosing the temple, from which it is separated by a narrow court, which eventually merges into the cloister of the outer hall. This wall, like those of the temple itself, is covered by hieroglyphics in *bas-relief*, not *incised*, and many of the figures which occur are well modelled. Various scenes from the life of its times are pictured here, among which are crocodile and hippopotamus hunts, in which all the accessory facts, even to the strands of ropes or the meshes of fishing-nets, are carefully elaborated.

As is so frequently the case, the temple is so surrounded by rubbish-heaps as to be practically standing in a deep depression which prohibits any distant or general view of the building, and, until cleared out by M. Marriette, even supported a native village upon its roof.

The village of Edfu is entirely lacking in pictorial interest, but appears to be cleaner and better built than many of the mud-towns on the Nile. It can, however, boast of a good school and evidently capable teacher. On returning from the temple this year, a boy of ten or twelve attached himself to our party, and began to speak in very good English, which he informed us had been entirely acquired in the village school. Presently he turned to one of the party, and said, "You are not English, you are American."

"Well," replied the gentleman, "that is so, but what do you know about America?"

"America is called the New World, and was discovered by Columbus."

"Perhaps you know all about Chicago?"

"Chicago is a large city built upon Lake Michigan, and some time ago destroyed by fire."

"And New York?"

"Is the leading seaport of America on the coast of the Atlantic."

"What about Liverpool?"

"Liverpool is the second city of England, and stands upon the Mersey."

So it went on, each answer being readily and correctly given, and not entirely parrot fashion, for subsequent questions proved him to have an intelligent knowledge of many subjects upon which we examined him. On parting at the steamer, he declined a "tip," saying that "he always liked a talk with the English, for no one could get on who did not speak their

language"! Cheeky, no doubt, but interesting as showing how education, and the *desire* for education, is spreading in the country.

As we steam southward the scenery changes in character. The hills are lower, and have little of that boldness which formerly impressed us. The banks also are less precipitous, and though of great height are more shelving, stretching in big sweeps from the water to the belt of trees which marks high-water level, the difference between low Nile and flood being about forty-five feet.

Irrigation here is increasingly difficult as the Nile falls. Each drop in the level requires the erection of another shadoof, and the cutting of a long and gradually deepening drain by which to carry water to the first. Sometimes three, and even four, shadoofs will be required to connect the receding water with the thirsty land above; each shadoof is worked by one or more men or boys, and proves a heavy drain upon the labour-supply of the farm. Under a powerful sun it is terribly hard work, and the labourers are practically nude, their well-set figures and glistening skins shining in the sun like classic bronzes.

The principal crop appears to be maize, but as usual the banks left by the falling water are planted in beans, onions, and water-melons. While date-palms are becoming less frequent, the castor-oil plant is more in evidence, and looks very gay in its scarlet blossoms and luscious foliage, and round about Kom Ombos particularly I notice large areas under this crop.

KOM OMBOS

This temple, dedicated to the worship of the crocodile, is very appropriately built on the water's edge, its pylon standing on the very brink. What remains of the temple is small in extent, but the inscriptions on the walls are particularly interesting, and the capitals and deep cornice richly carved. Standing as it does on the river, and entirely free from obstruction, Kom Ombos is a striking feature in a landscape otherwise somewhat lacking in character, and, especially in the softer evening effects, forms a good subject for the painter.

As we proceed, the former grandeur of the scenery is left behind, and the limestone mountains which have been our daily companions from Cairo, and to which so much of the beauty of the river is due, will shortly disappear to give place to the granite hills and golden sands of Nubia. Presently a bend in the river discloses the palm-groves of Elephantine, and the town of Assuan surrounded by the hills which here close in upon the river, and mark the frontier of Egypt proper and the southern boundary of the Cataract.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST CATARACT

FEW places in Egypt, or indeed elsewhere, have the power of inspiring their visitors with such a feeling of almost personal regard as Assuan. All who stay there enjoy to the full the period of their visit, and leave it with sincere regret. There is little to do in the "tourist" sense, yet every day has its own interest. Without feeling the necessity of "going out and doing something," the visitor may live happily, perhaps lazily, all the time; and, after the hurry and fatigue of much dusty sightseeing, Assuan appears as a haven of rest, in which nothing more is expected of you than to live in the quiet enjoyment of the beauty it undoubtedly possesses.

No longer trailing at the heels of your dragoman and obediently regardful of the interesting facts he mechanically describes, you are emancipated, free, and once more restored to your lost individuality and self-respect.

My first visit to Assuan was in 1894, when the only accommodation the town afforded was the old Grand Hotel, and the dismantled steamer *Seti*, moored

FIRST CATARACT FROM ELEPHANTINE ISLAND

close by, in which any overflow of visitors might be housed. Though the hotel was, and still is, excellent, those days seem primitive when compared with to-day, when the addition of two of the largest and best-equipped hotels in the country hardly suffices to meet the requirements of the increasing numbers who now seek health and enjoyment in its deliciously pure air.

The old hotel stands in the main street (which forms a kind of promenade along the river-side), and is a curious, old-fashioned building, with an interior court from which open the public rooms and the several staircases leading to the upper stories. It has a kind of quaintness which always pleases me, and certainly is more in keeping with the spirit of the old frontier town than its modern rivals. The street itself is wide, and well shaded by palms and sycamores, which grow along the Nile bank and sometimes encroach upon the road-way. Below are the remains of Cleopatra's Bath ; and groups of sailing-boats constantly pass between you and Elephantine Island, green with the verdure of palm-groves which stand out against the golden sand-drifts lying on the western hills. To-day this former channel is dry except at high Nile, and a busy market animates banks where steamers used to pass. Should you have nothing else to do, it was sufficient amusement to sit under the portico of the hotel and enjoy the passing life, or spend an hour in bargaining for a "kūrbash" or a string of beads. Lower down the street are the shops and houses, which are brilliantly white in the sun, and some are perched upon the

enormous blocks of red granite which break out at various points. Beyond the town are palm-groves in which are the barracks of the native troops, while behind lie the streets and bazaars of the town.

We were a small party in 1894—I think only eight of us; but it was a very pleasant one, and the constant exchange of courtesies between our hotel and the mess of the 10th Sūdanese, then quartered there, supplied the social element most delightfully. One evening the mess would dine with us *en bloc*, the dinner being followed by a musical evening largely provided by the ladies, who performed on mandoline, guitar, or piano, but also memorable for the rousing choruses of the coon-songs. Another time we would join the mess. These occasions were rendered exciting by the long donkey-ride in the dark, and it was amusing to see ladies in evening dress clinging to their steeds as they stumbled through the palm-groves. Soldiers and donkey-boys escorted us, some with lanterns, which only dazzled, and perhaps added a little to the uncertainties of the ride.

Later, we saw this regiment march out of the town *en route* for the Sūdan, its commander soon to meet a soldier's death, though happily the second in command still enjoys the honours he has well earned at Khartūm and the Cape.

Assuan has always been the frontier town of Egypt proper; and at the time I speak of, though Wady Halfa was the headquarters of the frontier force, Mahdist bands disputed the intervening country and rendered it unsafe for travellers.

Close to the station was a deserted shop, its windows heavily festooned with cobwebs, and over whose door appeared the name of Charles Neufeld, which, with the subsequent arrival of Slatin Pasha, just escaped from Omdurman, brought home to all the great tragedy of the Sūdan then being enacted so close beside you. The bazaars, too, were full of Dervish trophies: swords and spears from Toski or Abu Klea, blood-stained "jibbeh" or coats of mail, hide shields broken by British bullets, all having a melancholy interest, and to be bought for a trifle.

The day of retribution is come and gone, and Assuan no longer is the sentinel of civilisation it then was; but its bazaars still contain weapons, and relics of the war, to remind us of that terrible time when regiment after regiment passed through its streets, only to be lost in the burning deserts to the south.

Pleasanter souvenirs than these, however, are to be found in the shops. Fine amber beads of large size, long pipe-stems of carved ebony, curious sticks and ornaments, or strings of beads on plaited leather made by the handsome Besharīn, and the universally demanded "kūrbash" or whips of hippopotamus-hide. These whips vary very much in value, the special point of excellence demanded being a perfectly even gradation from the thick stock to its finely tapering points. Some are six or seven feet in length, and a whip of such a size, well proportioned and flexible, is now hard to find, and costly when met with. These used to be common instruments of punishment, and cut the flesh

of the victim terribly if used with skill, so that the possession of one, and the threat of using it, often was a sufficient deterrent in itself without resort to more active means of correction. The use of the "kūrbash" in the country officially ceased with the English occupation, and few Europeans would think of using it upon their fellows, unless in self-defence in case of attack, happily a rare occurrence.

It used to be a frequent sport at Assuan to make up a small party on horseback, each armed with a long "kūrbash," and, cutting out one or more dogs from the village, "run" them across the desert to the hills. The poor dogs, though seldom caught, were no doubt terrified, but these "runs" over difficult ground were often fast, and had all those elements of risk and excitement which attract the foxhunter, and at the worst the frightened "pariah" suffered only an odd sting from the lash.

Gymkhanas also served to let out some of that exuberance which all who stay at Assuan seem to feel; but most attractive and suitable to the position were the water picnics and regattas among the islands of the Cataract.

Most of us then had our own sailing-boats, and there were others for hire if necessary: gaily painted little "feluccas," their stern-sheets shaded by an awning, and with a long red or blue streamer floating from the yard-arm in the breeze, or trailing in the water when calm. They were comfortable little boats, and fairly good sailers, and, loading up with lunch- and tea-basket,

THE FIRST CATARACT

we would start for an all-day excursion to the Cataract, or have a sailing match round Elephantine.

Leaving the old *Seti*, which was our general boat-house and my studio for the time-being, we soon passed the lower gate, a narrow channel between Elephantine and the bank, over which a ruined Roman fortress mounted guard.

All beyond was the Cataract basin, freely dotted with islets, between which ran strong eddies or miniature rapids which made sailing difficult. Sometimes these little falls were a foot or more in height, and it required considerable judgment in order to nurse your boat up the back eddy, and then suddenly fill sail and "jerk" her up the rapid; failure meant a long drift down-stream before you could renew the attempt, and a correspondingly great advantage to your most successful rival.

These little islands, which are formed by a collection of granite boulders filled in with silt, are very pretty, and are usually well covered with shrubs and trees of various kinds;—charming picnic-places when the failing wind did not permit of sailing, and ideal sketching stands, free from the flies and fleas and disconcerting smells incidental to many others we have had to endure.

Here you will often see men fishing with lines, though personally I have never seen anything caught. The Egyptians, however, love to idle in the sun, and this pretence of fishing as an excuse for "loafing" finds many sympathisers at home.

The banks themselves are, on the Eastern side,

rugged hills of grotesquely piled-up rock, among which are little patches of cultivation and an occasional hamlet; at the water's edge the red-granite boulders have, under the combined action of sun and water, become coated with a glistening skin of black, smooth to touch, and polished as though an army of housemaids had been engaged in blackleading them. A little higher their own ruddy tint gleams bright in the sunshine. On the western side the high hills are almost entirely covered by the drift-sand poured over them from the deserts beyond; and among the many beauties Egypt has to show, none are more lovely than these enormous wreaths of sand, gold in colour and with a sheen like satin. From the terrace of the new Cataract Hotel is a very fine view of these sand-covered mountains, whose local colour is enhanced by the outjutting rocks of red and plum-colour, the vivid verdure of the islands, and the delicately blue sky, all more or less repeated in the water below.

It is Philæ, however, which most people come to see, and usually no time is lost before the excursion is made. This should be done on donkey-back, every bit of the journey being interesting.

Shortly after leaving the town you will reach the Cufic Cemetery, an extensive burial-ground, whose ancient tombs and cupolas have a certain picture value; or a slight divergence from the direct path allows of an inspection of the old granite quarries, whence most, if not all, of the huge monoliths which we have got to know have been brought. Here may still be seen the

CUFIC CEMETERY, ASSUAN

partially executed obelisk which, destined to adorn some temple, still remains undetached from the rock of which it is a part. This is interesting in that it shows the ancient method of quarrying ; and one is moved to speculate upon the cause which brought the work to this abrupt conclusion.

For a certain distance your path follows the course of an old Roman wall of sun-dried brick, originally of great height and thickness, but now ruinous. How is it, one is inclined to ask, that a people whose work was usually characterised by so much solidarity and strength should in Egypt be content to use so perishable a material as this ?

Presently you leave behind all trace of man and traverse a desert strangely wild. The sand is greyish in colour, and in all directions are low ranges of irregular hills, composed of blocks of granite piled up in indescribable confusion. Here and there are pinnacles, formed by some huge rock curiously, and apparently insecurely, balanced upon another as though placed there by a hand ; and individual stones occasionally bear forms of weird suggestion, which adds to the "uncanny" effect of it all. Not a pleasant bit of desert, perhaps, but impressive and in its way fascinating.

The pylons of the temple eventually rise above the rough ground before you, and a final gallop between native huts and compounds brings you to the bank of the river, where, resting under a sycamore, you can sit and gaze upon the scene you have journeyed so far to see.

Philæ is really very beautiful, and, no matter under what effect of light or from what point of view it may be seen, it is always a picture; and, jewel-like, the beauty of the island is enhanced by the setting of rugged hills and flowing stream which encircle it.

I recently paid a last farewell visit to Philæ, and already the work necessary for its preservation had converted the temple into a workshop, and, by the cutting down of its trees, and the covering of the natural banks with masonry, much of its original charm has been destroyed. Whether the great dam will result in its eventual destruction or not, its banks at any rate will be submerged, and it can never again be seen as the beautiful verdure-clad island we have known.

The temple itself has never been completed, the advent of the Romans and the *amours* of Cleopatra no doubt being among the contributing causes. This perhaps adds a little to the interest of the building, as it gives us an insight into the methods adopted in its construction. In the colonnade which leads to the great pylon, the columns are remarkable for the great variety of their capitals, and in some cases they are still uncarved, only the first "blocking out" of the stone having been done. From this, as well from other unfinished decorations elsewhere, it is fair to assume that the Egyptians were in the habit of first building, and then elaborating their carvings *in situ*, where the full effect of the design might be estimated from time to time; a better principle, to my mind, than our own, which usually completes such decoration on the mason's

PHILÆ

bench, before the stone is placed in the position it is destined to occupy, and where, perhaps, difference of lighting, as well as height and distance, may seriously modify the effect intended to be produced.

Very beautiful in form and colouration are the columns of the inner hall, which Mr. Newman, the American artist, has so entirely made his own ; and in the Kiosk, or " Pharaoh's Bed," the introduction of an unusually long impost between the exceedingly rich capitals and the architrave gives it an effect of grace and elegance not usually associated with the art of ancient Egypt. The mural decoration of the Kiosk, and the raised hieroglyphs and figure-carving of the small gateway at the eastern corner of the pylon, are other special points of interest which repay study.

There is one curious phenomenon associated with any monument or place of interest in Egypt. Wherever you may happen to go, whether it be a deserted temple, an unfrequented mosque, or a rocky islet in the Cataract, immediately, and apparently from the bowels of the earth, *some one* will suddenly appear to beg a piastre or to offer his undesired services. Philæ is no exception to the rule, and no sooner do you step upon the island than men and children appear from all directions, like vultures scenting their prey. It is really amusing at times, and the native can be no humourist or he would see the frequent absurdity of the thing himself!

One day, for instance, I noticed a small boy of seven or eight gravely attempting to assist over some fallen

masonry a worthy dame of such proportions that, had she stumbled in her climbing, he could not have escaped destruction beneath her fall! This same child had pluck, however, for on one of the party laughingly threatening to throw him into the water from the terrace on which we were standing, the youngster promptly dived in himself, a distance of probably thirty feet or more, and swimming to the bank disappeared among the trees. Presently, however, he returned, pushing in front of him, as he swam, a log which bore the still more diminutive form of the infant sister he brought to claim the "backsheesh" he had earned!

All these people are more or less amphibious, and apparently take to water before they can walk. Even young lads will fearlessly swim the lesser cataracts, and employ a sort of overhand stroke which keeps their heads and chests well above the waves; and it is very amusing to see half a dozen or more of them plunge in from the rocks like so many frogs, and whirl down the rapid much as children might prance across a hayfield.

Log-swimming down the "Great Gate," or principal rapid of the Cataract, is a feat for men, and worth seeing. A boat is procured at Shelal, and is manned by eight or ten swarthy Berberīn, under the control of a competent "rais," who requires a quick eye and a strong arm if he would avoid disaster. Starting in smooth water and under sail, it is not long before the impetus of the stream is felt as the channel narrows. Then the sail is taken in, and the rowers get out their sweeps. Eddies catch the boat and demand all the

energy and attention of the "rais," under whose direction a strong pull on one side or the other by the rowers carries the boat clear of a sunken rock or dangerous current. The work is done silently and anxiously until, at a given signal, the boat is with great difficulty rounded up and moored to the bank a hundred yards or so above the Cataract. Taking up your position lower down, the "fantasia" begins. One by one the naked swimmers plunge into the stream, each with a log of wood about five feet in length, and of the thickness of a man's thigh. Reappearing, each man is astride of his log, which sinks under his weight until the water is above the waist, and only the end of the log appears. Assisting the impetus of the stream by powerful strokes, the swimmer rushes down the narrow, seething waters. Now he is caught in a wave which leaps high into the air, and a moment later is sucked under by the eddy which succeeds; again the log shoots clear out of the water, but is soon recaptured by the swimmer. So they pass by you with terrific velocity, now entirely lost among the swirling waves, and again almost forced out of the water by the pent-up energy of the stream. It is a "battle-royal," for life and a "backsheesh"!

The force of the current is perhaps best realised on the return journey, when the untiring and strenuous exertions of the crew barely make headway. At last the smoother water of the wider stream above is reached and sail again set, and the crew, released from their rowing, break into a song of thanksgiving, in

which they alternate praise to Allah with a narration of their own exploits.

This really exciting scene, and the more dangerous shooting of the rapids by boat, are now ended with the closing of the Barrage Gates, and the First Cataract has sacrificed to the needs of the country another of its traditional attractions.

It used to be possible to return to Assuan by a very rough but exceedingly interesting pathway which ran along the river-bank, and, especially toward evening when all nature has taken on a richer colour and more solemn mien, nothing could be more beautiful than the panorama of the Cataract basin as here seen. This path also has fallen a victim to the engineer, though fortunately the water still remains, and similar beauty of scenery may be enjoyed by boat.

In such scenes and excursions time passes very happily at Assuan, and, failing any other occupation, it is quite sufficient just to *live*. The air is delightful, and though hot it is too dry to be enervating. The dryness, however, adds difficulty to the work of the artist, and in painting my view of the Cataract from Elephantine I was obliged repeatedly to soak my picture in the river, and even then found it difficult to spread a wash, so quickly did the surface dry. Though the days are often hot (and I have known it to be 107° *indoors* on New Year's Day), the evenings are delicious, and the nights, which are often cold, refresh you after the heat of the day and prepare you for the morrow.

Much more of interest remains which I have not attempted to describe. The cool and picturesque bazaars, equally attractive to the artist and to the curio-hunter ; Grenfell's tomb, or the camp of the Besherīn,—each in turn furnishes the day's employment.

I have said enough, perhaps, to show that Assuan is delightful, and I may add that in no other place in Egypt have I noticed the donkey-boys and guides so well-controlled and quiet in their demeanour.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LOWER NILE

I WONDER how many of the thousands who annually "do" the Nile trip have the enterprise to explore its lower reaches? Picnic parties to the Barrage are frequent enough, but this great dam represents to the world at large Ultima Thule in that direction. And yet the lower river, though lacking many points of interest the Upper Nile affords, is well worth a visit, and has a peculiar charm of its own.

I confess that I had little idea of the interest attaching to this, to me, unknown waterway, until a few years ago. On the invitation of a high Government official, I accompanied him in his yacht upon a tour of inspection of the lower river and the coast towns; and, joining the steamer at Kaisr-el-Nil, we were soon past the Barrage and embarking upon what was to me a voyage of discovery.

Already, though only a few miles below Cairo, a great difference is noticeable. Progressing by huge sweeping curves, the river is almost entirely enclosed within its high banks, which, though devoid of palms, are fringed with big sycamores, thorns, acacia, and

MOONLIGHT ON THE NILE, NEAR CAIRO

tamarisks, giving it the appearance of a well-wooded English river. Here and there among the darker foliage glisten the brilliantly green shoots of the mulberry tree just bursting into leaf.

From time to time groups of heavily laden lateen boats, laboriously crawling up-stream, lend the necessary touch of Orientalism ; while goatherds with their flocks, or the occasional village-life on either side, give variety to a scene whose main characteristic is placidity.

Beyond everything else the reflections fascinate me. Every form is repeated to perfection, and in colour hardly less vivid than the object itself. As evening falls the purple shadows slowly creeping up the bank contrast sharply with the golden sunlight. By night each star has its counterpart below, and the limpid water is only broken by the ripple of a passing fish, while the silence may be felt! I have experienced nothing in Upper Egypt quite so romantic as those quiet eventides on the woody reaches of the Lower Nile.

Daylight invites criticism, and one realises that the villages are poor and devoid of many picturesque features common in up-country hamlets, and, possibly because the people are themselves impoverished, have an air of squalor not always apparent in the white-washed towns of the Upper Nile. There is, I think, no disguising the fact that these districts have to some extent been ruined by the extensive irrigation-works higher up. Water-wheels are often idle for want of water, and the formerly great industry of water-borne

traffic has almost disappeared, except during high Nile, when for a brief period the long-suffering watermen can ply their trade profitably. In some places villages, built originally close upon the river-bank, are now so far from the remnant of the stream trickling on the other side, that their women must traverse nearly a mile of sand and mud before they can fill their jars. Not only is the supply limited, but it is correspondingly bad in quality. The shallow stream cannot remain fresh under the hot sun, while débris of all kinds decomposing in it pollute still further an already tainted supply. With a further hundred miles or so of steadily diminishing volume and constantly added contamination, it may readily be imagined that the inhabitants of the coast towns have to undergo real privation in the matter of their drinking-supply, and one can only wonder that disease is not more common among them. No doubt centuries of gradual inoculation protect the native from the effects of water impurities which few Europeans could withstand. Still, natural immunity notwithstanding, an exceeding bitter cry for water constantly goes up from these poor folk, and one cannot but enter the strongest protest against the manner in which the lower river is neglected by the authorities in Cairo; for, while the rest of the Delta continues to prosper in a marvellous degree, it is to some extent at the expense of a large community whose capital is in their boats, and their trade upon the water. Poor patient folk! A small sum annually expended in dredging and conserving the river would at least relieve their direst

necessities, and preserve an industry which affords a livelihood to a large section of the community.

Our return journey amply illustrated the disabilities these watermen have to suffer. We arrived at Mansūrah late in the evening, and during the night scores of heavily laden "giassas," which had been for some time unable to proceed for want of water, started upstream, firmly believing that the Barrage authorities would let down enough water to enable the Pasha's steamer to make the trip in comfort, the benefit of which supply they hoped to share.

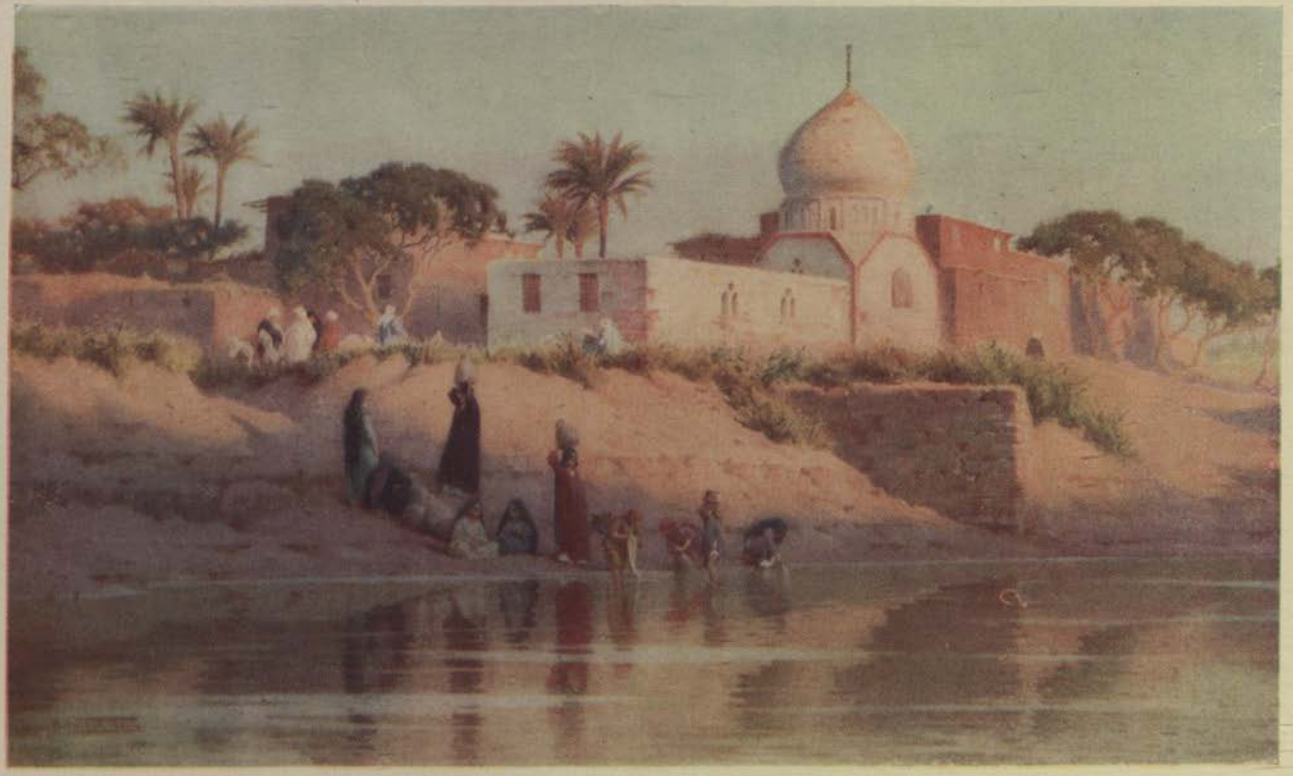
Our journey was far from smooth sailing. Groundings were frequent, and once we overran some submerged masonry, which smashed one of our plates and filled the fore-peak with water, and some hours' work was necessary before this damage was repaired, our men having to work under the water.

The climax, however, was reached at a village called Tarbaniyeh, where the river, though apparently good water, had only one narrow and very tortuous navigable canal, in which several "giassas" were hopelessly stuck. Our men were sent out wading in the hopes of finding a way round them, but without avail, and the only course open to us was to make fast a hawser and tow the obstructing vessels backwards out of the way. We made fast to the nearest boat and went astern. The moment, however, the strain came on, we pulled her whole stern out without moving the boat an inch. Then followed a scene which, though pathetic, was amusing. The owner, with loud lamenta-

tions and appeals to Allah and the Prophet, began "rending his garments" in the most Scriptural manner, the tearing of his clothing adding zest to his declamatory protestations. Finally, jumping overboard, he tore his turban from his head and beat the water with it, until the cloths and "tarboosh" were sailing downstream, and the poor man, in a frenzy of despair, stalked ashore with hands outstretched to heaven in an agony of indignant protest. Naturally, we did not wish the man to suffer, as we told the other boatmen, who, with loud cries of "Return, O afflicted, the Pasha will be kind," eventually persuaded him to come back and assess the damage, which was done to our mutual satisfaction.

Our interest in this dramatic interlude prevented our noticing the fact that we were ourselves drifting into a very awkward position. The set of the stream had put us broadside on to a bank, the "scour" under our keel gradually working us higher and higher, until we were hard aground in about twelve inches of water, and all hopes of hauling off out of the question. Night had come on, and nothing was to be done; and with the river falling an inch or so a day, the chances seemed to be that the steamer must remain where she was until next high Nile, and *we* be put ashore to complete our journey on donkeys. With daylight came the Sheykh of Tarbaniyeh (an intelligent old man, with whom I had a long conversation), offering assistance and hospitality, and very soon a hundred or more of his villagers surrounded us. Directed by the

VILLAGE OF SHINBAB ON THE LOWER NILE



Sheykh, his men put their backs and shoulders under our vessel, and, on the word, gave a "heave," which lifted her bodily a few feet. In this way we were gradually carried over the bank, past the obstructing "giassas," and launched fairly in the channel above them, where we anchored and went ashore with the Sheykh to breakfast.

While the watermen are universally poor, there are many prosperous farms in the district, some proprietors being wealthy, among whom must be classed our host, the Sheykh of Tarbaniyeh. His house was imposing in appearance, having many courts and gardens, and, *mirabile dictu*, seemed well built and equipped. The refreshments provided were certainly excellent, and, what is more unusual in country districts, the cigarettes were unquestionable. The gardens would have delighted suburban residents at home, and suggested the palace of a pasha rather than that of a "yellow" sheykh. Leaving the reception-room on the ground-floor, French windows opened into a rose-garden, the well-kept walks being shadowed by vines and figs on trellis-work. Clumps of feathery bamboo sprang from "round points" in the walks, a fountain and fish-pond adding refreshing coolness to the shady quadrangle. The whole was surrounded by a cloister with alcoves at the corners, and through a central arch you entered an orchard and vegetable-garden beyond, in which were tamarinds, Japanese medlars, oranges, limes, almonds, pomegranates, artichokes, and asparagus, etc., the borders of the beds being of carnations, pansies,

and arum lilies. The whole *ménage* was so excellent that I wondered how it could be done, until incidentally in conversation I learned that he had recently sold land at £28 per "feddan,"[1] which a few years previously had only cost £5 to £6. The land, however, was well supplied by irrigating canals, and did not depend entirely upon the slender stream for its fertilisation.

The Tarbaniyeh estate is perhaps an exception; certainly in most cases the villages and towns upon the banks of the Lower Nile speak of a departed glory. Bazaars, mosques, and palaces, built in the palmy days, are fast going to decay, most of the modern erections being of the poorest description.

One cannot help wondering how it is that nowadays so little of architectural value is produced in a country rich in monuments of Saracenic art, and to which an unusual prosperity has recently arrived. Perhaps it is that to-day the people are too busy making money. They dream and talk incessantly of "feloos,"[2] while in older times the pashalic system made it unwise for a man to be wealthy; he was more sure of being robbed.

While their dwellings are poor, the picturesqueness of life on the Lower Nile is great, and in no part of the country have I seen so much variety of colour in the costumes, the brilliance of which may perhaps be an unconscious set-off against the greyness of their lives.

The ladies naturally display the most variety and gaiety of colour. The black outer cloak is worn shorter than in other parts of Egypt, showing below

[1] Almost equivalent to an acre. [2] Money.

MIT GAMR ON THE LOWER NILE

very loose trousers of some bright colour, red predominating. The "mandil," or head-scarf, is always bright, canary yellow, vivid green, crimson, etc., which, with a peep of an equally brilliant undervest, sets off the bronze (and often beautiful) faces of the girls to wonderful advantage.

I never tire of sketching these dusky beauties at their watering-places. Here, more than at any other time, they display that grace of action so universal in Egyptian women, and, as they wade in the water, the additional display of shapely limbs and variegated costumes is infinitely more attractive than the "floppy" trousers and sombre overalls of *terra firma.*

I was one morning sketching a very dainty maiden busy at the water-side, when, observing me, she prepared to leave.

"Don't go away," I cried, "I won't hurt you!"

She looked at me a moment, and then replied, "All right, who would be afraid of you, my father?" Whereupon she posed gracefully and enabled me to finish my sketch, well earning the "backsheesh" which followed.

In this connection I must mention another incident which occurred at Mit Gamr. We had moored our steamer close to the place where the women came for water. There were a great number of them filling their pots, washing clothes, cooking utensils, and themselves in the intervals of gossip. Some would go bodily into the river and have a swim, and then, "balass" on head, majestically walk home again, their

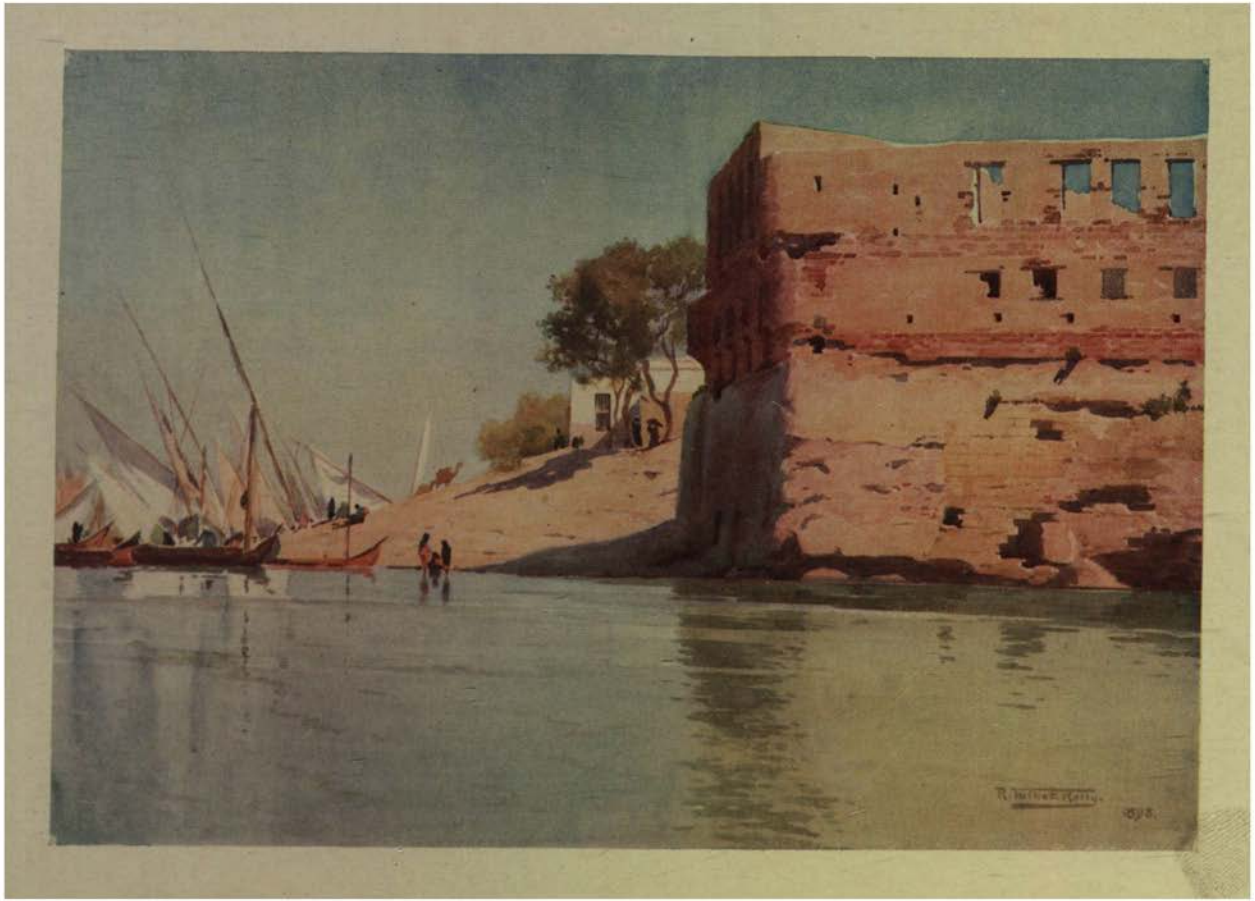
dripping garments trailing in the dust. One young lady, however, had hit upon a better plan, for, carrying a bundle on her head, she waded into the water until it reached her chin, then, slipping off all her clothing, she washed it and herself, and finally, gathering her wet garments together, prepared to come out. For the moment I thought she intended to land in a state of nudity; but no! as she stepped along she slowly unfastened the bundle on her head, which proved to be another costume. This she quietly slipped over her shoulders, and allowed to fall gradually, without touching water, or exposing an inch of her person, until, reaching the bank, she stood radiant in her fresh clothing, with the wet garments in her hand!

This town of Mit Gamr, with Zifta on the opposite bank, forms, I think, one of the most picturesque bits in the country. The river sweeps broadly between them in a double curve, the old houses rising directly from the water on either side, and in many cases supported on built columns whose foundations are submerged.

The buildings are very rich in colour; old whitewash, sunburned and weathered, is opposed to an edifice of yellow stone or red brick, the whole gaining a sparkle and brilliance by contrast with the green-painted window-shutters and the foliage of the arboured cafés on the banks.

Some of the mosques have a curious double minaret, and in the town are many quaint corners which it has always been my intention one day to paint. Un-

A RUINED PALACE AT MIT GAMR



fortunately, during this present spring 1000 houses and 200 shops of the old town have been destroyed by fire, and I fear that my opportunity is lost.

Without attempting any detailed description of the many days spent on this journey, I was specially charmed with the old town of Samanūd, whose fine bazaar facing the river is, I believe, the oldest existing in Egypt; though, alas! the trade which formerly created it has failed to preserve it in its pristine dignity and prosperity.

Faraskūr is another charming scene from the river, but without any special internal feature on exploration; and of another type is the little village of Shinbab, whose tomb-mosque and tree-shaded huts looked very picturesque in the early evening light.

In pure landscape the Lower Nile is very rich, and the populace is deferentially agreeable. Whenever I had occasion to leave the steamer I was treated with the utmost respect, and was never asked for a "backsheesh" excepting once, when a small mite proffered the request, only to be soundly rated for her rudeness by her elder sister.

In some respects I found these people to be much like the Irish peasantry in their simple politeness to a stranger. How often in Ireland, for instance, will an artist while sketching be saluted by the passer-by with "God bless your work, sir!" So here I was frequently "salaamed" by a native who would ask—

"Does your work prosper?"

"Thanks be to Allah," I would reply.

"God increase your prosperity," he responds. "Our Lord and the Prophet know the good men."

This invocation of the Deity is universal, but their ideas of a suitable blessing are sometimes odd to our minds. My servant had a bad cold and threatened to be ill; my wife therefore got him a mixture and a bottle of cod-liver oil, and duly instructed him as to when and how to take them. The following day I asked him if he had followed the "sit's"[1] instructions.

"Yes, my master," he replied, "I have drunk the nasty stuff; may God prosper you and give you another son!"

As we sail down the river and begin to near Damietta, the stream becomes more sluggish and the water deeper, the fall to the sea being so slight that the river-water is held up as by a dam, and coincidently the vegetation appears to be richer. Palms again abound, while fig-trees and vines are plentiful. I noticed from time to time what appeared to be villages of high conical buildings, like pottery kilns. These turned out to be pigeon-cotes, millions of these birds being housed in this way for the sake of their dung, which is used as a fertiliser. Costumes again have undergone a modification, and the type of people is partly sailor and partly fellah; the intervals of farming operations being often employed upon the river in freight-carrying, or in sea-fishing outside. This sea influence seems to make the people more manly and independent, and I was much charmed with the simple,

[1] Lady.

EARLY MORNING AT DAMIETTA

good-natured folk, whose philosophy and industry serve to some extent to overcome the natural poverty of their condition.

At last a sudden bend in the river brought us into full and immediate view of Damietta : a glorious stretch of piled-up buildings, domes, and minarets, broken by the masts and spars of innumerable feluccas and giassas with their high lateen sails, coasting-vessels from Alexandria and Port Said, Greek wine-boats, schooners and brigs from Italy and the Levant, all serving to produce an impression of prosperity and trade.

Alas, poor Damietta ! the Venice of Egypt ! its trade is but a shadow of what it *had* been, and, like its prototype, little is left of its earlier prosperity but the fast-decaying palaces and mosques, and other evidences of a once important and flourishing position in the world of trade.

The visitor to Damietta is at once impressed with the fact that here is something quite different from anything he has seen elsewhere in Egypt. Its main features differ essentially from other Nile cities.

Built upon the east bank, the houses rise from the water as at Būlak, but in most cases have as their basement a stone wharf or landing-stage, and the broad paved quay in front of the Government buildings proclaims Damietta a maritime port. Along the water-side are several of the principal mosques, broad steps leading to the river, as at the Ghauts of Benares. Here the faithful perform their ablutions preparatory to prayer. Boats laden with fruit and food-stuffs hawk

their goods from house to house, while the women making their purchases, or washing and drying clothes on their little stagings, give quite a Venetian aspect to this river-front.

Frequently from upper windows water is hauled up by means of a rope and bucket, a pulley being fixed for this purpose. Every house has its little stone stairway leading into the water, and these are often covered with a wooden hood so as to enable the ladies to bathe in privacy. Everything suggests an amphibious life; and the river here being of great depth, vessels of large tonnage are able to enter the port and discharge or receive their cargoes safely.

Rain is frequent and heavy on the coast; and in place of the sun-dried bricks of Upper Egypt it is necessary here to use *burnt* brick, the vivid red of which showing through broken plaster lends an additional touch of colour to the buildings, and adds considerably to the general charm of the place. The principal streets are for the same reason flagged with stone, and in consequence very much cleaner than any others I have seen in Egypt. Inside the town are many fine buildings, baths, mosques, and the palaces of former grandees. The main street has many good shops, and evidently retains a large trade, while some of the "odd corners" are most quaint and pictorial, and though different in character are as picturesque as anything in Cairo.

Two features of domestic architecture struck me. In place of the mushrabiyeh work of Cairo, the windows

are filled with a strong wooden lattice, the edges of which are carved in a variety of ways, giving them a very graceful appearance. These lattices are more lasting than mushrabiyeh work, which, being made up of innumerable small pieces fitted together, would quickly warp and fall to bits in such a damp district as this is in winter.

The doorways of the houses also are uncommon, and are usually made with a double arch intersecting at the middle, the door itself being carved in panel form.

We paid a visit here to Abd-el-Salaam Bey's house, one of the best in Damietta. Its entrance was from the town, but fronted the river, and from its balconies afforded a splendid view to the west. On the opposite side of the river was a shipbuilding and repairing yard, most picturesque in the variety of craft lying there; and beyond, groves of date-palms which gradually lost themselves in the sunset.

The Bey's house was a surprise. Like all the rest, the exterior was more or less dilapidated-looking; but on entering, it proved to be handsomely furnished and comfortable, though I was sorry to see so much French upholstery in place of the more characteristic and suitable native furniture.

The Bey himself was a fine, courtly old gentleman, and, as his collection of old china and books would imply, of remarkable culture for an Egyptian of his rank. After the usual refection of coffee and sweetmeats, in which delicious preserved dates were an

agreeable item, he showed us his ambers and pipes, of which he had a large number, some of the mouth-pieces being richly jewelled. These pipes (shebūbīk) are almost always regarded as heirlooms, and remain in a family for generations, so that Abd-el-Salaam's collection may be regarded as his pedigree, of which he was justly proud.

The outskirts of the town are no less picturesque than its water-side, and in the principal cemetery there is one of the most impressive domes in Egypt, its bulbous form being most uncommon. This tomb-mosque, of which I give an illustration, is the burial-place of a former sheykh of the town, and in many features is, so far as I know, unique. The mosque minarets also are of extreme elegance and very lofty, and occur frequently in various directions. These Arab cemeteries are always interesting, and I found a great variety of subjects among them. In one tomb, evidently that of a sailor, I noticed suspended above the grave a well-executed model of a vessel, the only case in which I have seen such an addition to their usually bare interior.

It will be seen from what I have said, and from the illustrations I give, that Damietta is well worth a visit from the artist or intelligent sightseer; and I may add that the people are most polite and willing to oblige, and I found no difficulty in getting models here, any passer-by apparently being willing to pose if asked.

Damietta itself is easily accessible by train, and has two Greek hotels which are quite comfortable enough for men who can rough it a little. The river-trip, however,

SHEYKH'S TOMB AT DAMIETTA

is of great interest, and well worth doing, and can easily be performed by steam-launch from Cairo. Should ladies be of the party, tents and camp-beds should be carried, local inns being impossible for them, and the cabins of a launch too cramped for comfort. Excellent camping-places are everywhere available, provisions of good quality are to be bought, and such a trip as I have described may in this way be made without inconvenience and at moderate cost. Wild duck abound on the lower river, which, with snipe, quail, and pigeon shooting, goes far to relieve the tedium of the less interesting reaches. But, though sport is plentiful, I recommend the trip purely for its varied charm of life and scenery, not the least attractive being the sense of adventure, and freedom from conventionality.

To me, Damietta was quite charming, as also was the whole river-journey, but this visit has left with me a feeling of pity and indignation. The people are "maslūm,"[1] and I think unnecessarily so. There seems to me to be no reason why Damietta should not again become the flourishing shipping centre it once was, and only the policy (instituted by Mohammed Ali) of fostering the trade of Alexandria to the exclusion of other ports prevents the return of at least some portion of its former prosperity.

Without wishing to enter upon questions of policy, it appears to me that this attitude of exclusion is foolish. The trade of Alexandria is firmly established, and need hardly fear the rivalry of Damietta, whose commerce

[1] Afflicted.

might be developed in quite a different direction. The surrounding district of Ghait-en-Nasara[1] is peculiarly fertile, and capable of enormous production of fruit and vegetables. Why are its natural advantages neglected by the authorities? Fruit export alone might become a profitable asset for the people and the Government, and the building of a light railway to Port Said, or the institution of a fleet of shallow-draught steamers, would enable this district to send across Lake Menzala an endless supply of fresh vegetables and farm-produce for the provisioning of passing ships.

All this could be done without any interference with existing trades or privileges, land already used for this purpose elsewhere being equally available for the growth of cotton or other export commodities.

What is wanted is Government help in the way suggested. Given their proper means of communication, water in the river, their light railways, or steamers to Port Said, etc., and the sympathetic encouragement of the Government, a new era of prosperity would arise for Damietta (and incidentally for Rosetta also) which, while relieving the necessities of a hard-working and respectable population, would add materially to the revenue of the country.

[1] Field of the Christians.

CHAPTER IX

CANAL LIFE IN THE DELTA

LITTLE as the Nile below Cairo is known to visitors, still less are the majority acquainted with that vast network of irrigating canals which intersect the country in all directions. In sightseeing as in picture-making the "point of view" is everything; and many of these canals being navigable, a trip by water through the Delta is one which may be made in comfort, and affords scenes and incidents which differ essentially from those presented to a traveller on horseback on a higher level of the canal-bank.

On the eastern side of the Delta these canals finally empty themselves into Lake Menzala, an inland sea, stretching from Port Said to Damietta, and in itself well worthy of a visit.

Leaving Damietta, a ride of some two miles through a country of extreme fertility brings you to Ghait-en-Nasara, a fishing-station on the lake, where is immediately presented to you a phase of life peculiar to the district.

The fishing industry of the lake is of great importance, and employs profitably a large number of people

whose operations are controlled by Government; Ghait-en-Nasara being the principal *octroi* and resident station of the Controller of Fisheries. Here hundreds of fishing-boats daily land their "hauls," the best fish going to Cairo and other large markets, smaller kinds being consumed by the fellahīn or made into "fessīkh"[1] at Matarieh and elsewhere.

As far as the eye can reach stretches the water of the lake, on whose quiet bosom hundreds of the whale-back boats peculiar to the district skim gracefully as they shoot their nets, while others from time to time return to land their still living freight, which is kept in tanks on shore until ready for despatch to various markets.

Occasionally a big "drive" is organised by the resident Controller. Every available boat is out in the small hours of the morning, and forms a huge semi-circle some miles away. Turning homewards the boats slowly return, the crews beating the water and chanting weird songs as they proceed. Gradually the circle narrows until it is plainly apparent that the water within the cordon is literally alive with fish. Then ensues a scene to be remembered. From every boat men jump into the water, dragging nets which are eventually overlapped until the entire circle is enclosed. Each moment the space becomes narrower, and the cries of the men louder, while overhead swarms of pelican, flamingo, crane, and sea-birds add their screams to the cries of the fishermen. The seething water is

[1] Small fish, salted, and partly sun-cured and swathed in rancid oil.

A PASTORAL NEAR DAMIETTA

now alive with fish, which, finding escape impossible, leap high into the air, only to be met by a swoop of voracious sea-birds from above.

As the "catch" is being ladled into the boat, the splashing leaping mass of fish, amongst which hundreds of men are deliriously shouting, combined with the screeching of the birds, the flapping of wings, and the hissing of the water, makes up a scene of confusion and wild excitement which baffles description and is not readily forgotten. The take of fish on these occasions is of course enormous, and such a drive as I have attempted to describe is seldom authorised.

Lake Menzala is normally quiet in its character, and being closely preserved against shooting has become a home for millions of water-fowl. Neither on the lake itself nor in the surrounding marshes are firearms permitted, though the "wily" native will often replenish his larder by diving, and catching wild duck by the feet while unconsciously swimming above.

Pelicans and waders of all kinds abound, the first-named being of the most friendly disposition, and most of the boats have a tame specimen on board. They are interesting birds; their plumage is beautiful in the tender suggestion of pink showing through the white down, while the black or maroon points on wings and tail, and their multi-coloured bills and orange pouches, form a pretty colour-scheme, and the good-tempered silly birds have the art of looking wise in a manner which is quite irresistible.

In fine weather Lake Menzala is sufficiently interest-

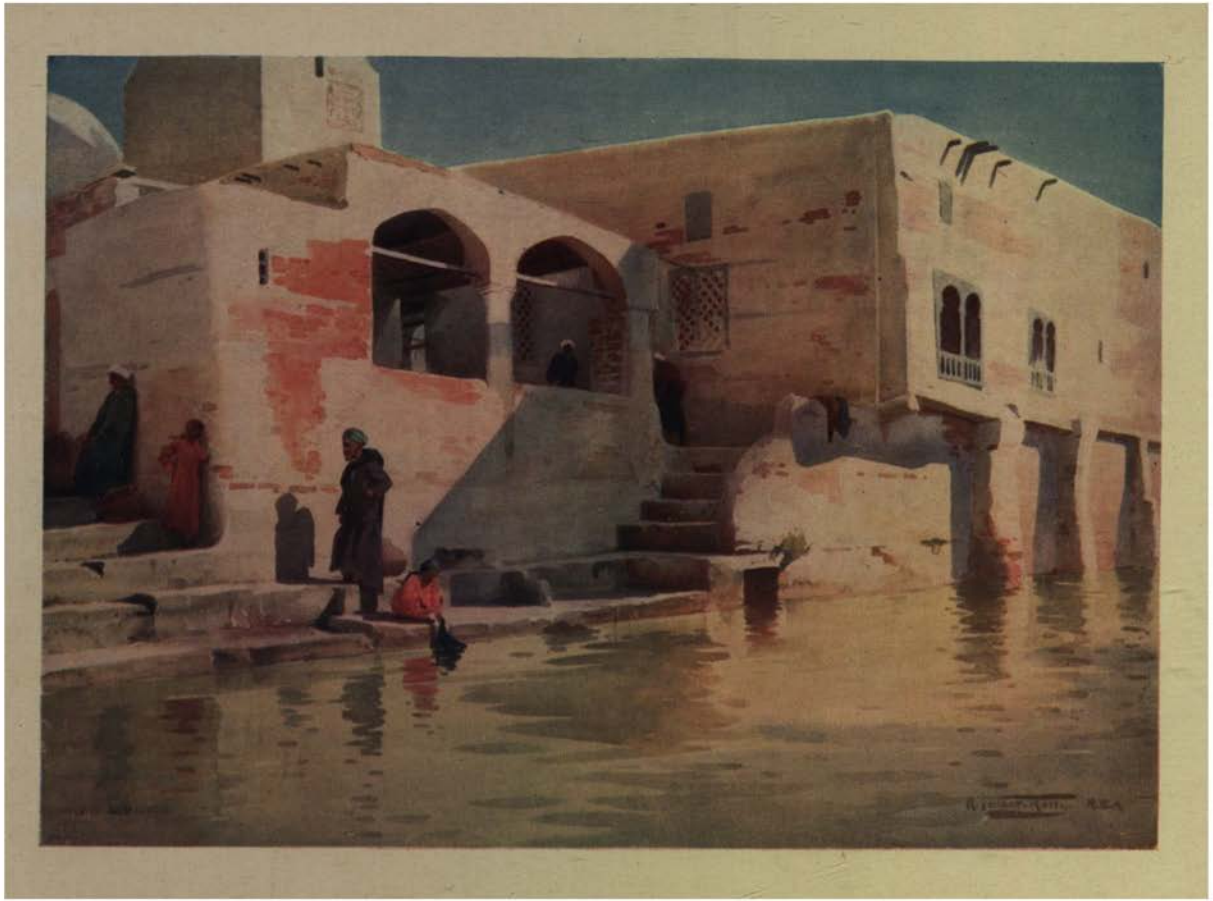
ing to occupy several days; a sail to Port Said, a day's fishing with the fleet, or to the artist the stalking and sketching of wild birds, passes the time pleasantly and advantageously. The fisher-folk also are hard-working and worthy creatures, and only too anxious to be obliging. While sketching here I have repeatedly interrupted men engaged in landing fish, who at my request have contentedly posed up to their waists in water while I introduced them into my subject.

From Ghait-en-Nasara a short sail brings you to Matarieh, also a fishing centre and the port of the town of Menzala.

As in Damietta, Menzala possesses many features of interest. Here also burnt brick takes the place of sun-dried, and, as we have noticed in Damietta, adds variety to the colour of buildings all more or less dilapidated. The form of the mosque minarets also is peculiar to this district, their height and beauty showing that at one time Menzala must have been wealthy and ambitious. On its outskirts are many old tombs, where also are many beautiful gardens and vine-walks of former grandees, now hopelessly neglected. Poor to-day and thinly populated, Menzala is a monument of picturesque decay, and, like most of the extremely pictorial places in Egypt I have visited, is squalid and insanitary in inverse ratio to its beauty.

The town is built on the banks of a canal called the "Bahr-es-Soghraieh," which, starting from the Nile at Mansūrah, serves, in its course of fifty miles or so of devious wanderings, to water as many farms and villages,

A WATER-SIDE MOSQUE AT MENZALA



each of which adds its quota of contamination to the stream.

It may be imagined that by the time Menzala is reached, the water of the canal is anything but savoury ; yet the people have their houses and mosques built into the water, and discharge their drainage into the stream, the drains being frequently close beside the steps from where the townswomen draw their domestic supply !

When last there the streets of the town had an unwonted look of cleanliness, a general cleaning-up having been ordered by the " Omdeh " in anticipation of a Government inspection. The accumulated garbage of the streets was, however, calmly and deliberately swept into the canal, their only source of water-supply ! On being remonstrated with, and the fact pointed out that such pollution of their water must inevitably result in disease, the only response vouchsafed by the Omdeh was—

" Maalaishe ya Bey di min Rubbani," which means, " It is not our fault, O Bey, our Lord sends it."

Being market-day, we thought we would stroll round and see the scene, always one of the most picturesque incidents of native life.

The market-place itself was simply the widening out of the principal street into an irregular sort of square, now thronged with people from the neighbouring district ; but in addition to being the market-place it was also the *cemetery* of the town, where the tombs of their departed friends served the market-people as

handy stands on which to dispose for sale fish and food-stuffs. Totally unconscious of the incongruity of the thing, mummers and jugglers performed in their booths, hawkers dispensed their sticky sweetmeats to the young, while their elders traded their live-stock and commodities.

I am glad to think that since my last visit the cemetery has been removed to higher ground some distance from the town, and to some extent at least a stop has been put to the local pollution of the water.

The surroundings of Menzala are very picturesque. As is usual in the north, palm-trees are scarce; but their place being supplied by high oaks, sycamore, lebbek, etc., the landscape is no less beautiful though differing in character from other parts of the Delta, and I found a good many subjects for pictures here. The canal itself, however, is entirely different from any other canal in the country. Originally a lesser arm of the Nile which had become dry, the Bahr-es-Soghraieh, or "little river," as the name means, is simply the old river-bed re-excavated for its present purpose, and, following the original windings, has all the appearance of a natural stream, whose wooded banks, broken here and there by a picturesque village or quaint tomb, are really beautiful, and every bend furnishes a pleasant vista with a possible surprise in store.

I was invited to make a trip up this canal by a Government official, our journey being made in a small dahabiyeh hired from a local magnate, in which were stored our tents and other camp equipment. As a west

wind was blowing, sailing was out of the question, our journey being from east to west, and we had therefore to be towed by the "guffrah"[1] of each village in turn. Starting from Menzala with a good team, we travelled well, the "rais-el-guffrah" meanwhile going on ahead to warn the next village to be ready. It was very pleasant, sitting on our cabin roof under a genial sun watching the woody bank glide by, the quietude of the scene being periodically broken by the incidents of village or agricultural life. Where nothing of human interest was to be seen, the flitting and splashing of hundreds of kingfishers supplied its place. This is a remarkable feature of the canal, for though every waterway in Egypt abounds in kingfishers, nowhere else have I seen them in such numbers as here. Out of curiosity I counted their nests in one reach of not more than two hundred yards, and found them to number over one hundred and fifty, and so tame were they that sometimes, as on rounding a bend we would get close in-shore, they would remain sitting on twigs as we passed almost within reach of them.

The lively cheerfulness of the Egyptian kingfisher always impresses me; he seems *happy*, and perhaps has reason. No one molests him, the river has abundance of fish, and, when satisfied, there is nearly always a generous warmth in which to plume himself and ruminate. One cannot help being struck by this little bird's power of assimilation. I have seen him catch a fish apparently much bigger than himself, and

[1] Plural of "gaffir," or village watchman.

eventually, after many efforts, swallow it, without so far as I could see increasing in bulk, and a moment later he is on the hunt again. How many victims have already been consumed it would be impossible to say, but it is evident that the kingfisher has powers of rapid digestion which this dyspeptic age might well envy!

Quietly the days passed, halting when I wished to sketch, or when my companion had inspection work to do. At sundown we would select a clean site near the canal-bank upon which to pitch our tents, and after dining in the little saloon of our yacht would turn in and sleep till shortly before sunrise. No dramatic incident marked the trip, our only excitement being perhaps occasioned by wandering cattle becoming entangled in our tent-ropes during the dark hours of the night; otherwise it was simply one succession of days in which easy travelling was combined with pleasant work. Without entering into detailed description of the whole journey, one or two of the villages on the banks may specially be mentioned. Mit Hadid is one of the most picturesque of the many beautiful villages that we met with in Northern Egypt. I give an illustration of the scene, now unfortunately to a large extent destroyed by the building of a light railway along the bank. The village of Salamūn, which stands in a commanding position at a bend of the stream, has many points of interest. The village itself is of some importance, and its tortuous and precipitous lanes presented many pictorial features; the best view,

MIT HADID

probably, is the one which I reproduce, where the irregular buildings of the village pile up picturesquely behind the mosque, which forms the only really architectural feature of the place. You will notice that from the minaret of the mosque, which in itself is of rather an unusual form, are some projecting poles; these are what remain of the scaffolding used in the erection of the building many hundred years ago, and which the builders forgot to remove on the completion of the work—a curious example of the Egyptian habit of *laisser faire*. The pool shown in my sketch looked lovely from a distance, but closer acquaintance proved it to be one of the most filthy "birkeh" possible, and literally alive with rats. Our camp here was across the canal, our tents being pitched under a fine grove of "gamase" trees, from which we had a particularly fine view of town and river, as well as being free from the flies and smells which are the inevitable accompaniment to any congregation of native houses.

On the river itself occurred many picturesque incidents. Here, in a large "giassa," passed a wedding-party accompanying the bride-elect to the distant village which was to be her new home; a pleasant-looking girl, who laughingly responded to the salutations of our party. She was accompanied by her female relations and the various articles of furniture or utensils which, with her own clothing contained in brightly painted wooden boxes, formed her contribution to the equipment of her new abode. The rowers in the bow extemporised songs to the accompaniment of the

"darabooka,"[1] played by one of the passengers, and I caught many facetious as well as complimentary references to both bride and groom. It is rather remarkable the faculty of extemporisation these people possess; for, though no doubt the language lends itself to rhythmic treatment, the quick manner in which the *improvisateur* will vary his sentiments, and seize upon any passing event or personality as a subject of his witticism, is really clever. Their sense of rhythm is extraordinary, and they largely indulge in syncopations, time being marked by clapping of hands or striking of the "tabla,"[2] and this, when performed by a crowd as the accompaniment to some general chant or song, is very striking and good in its effect. While sitting here at work my notice was attracted by the gyrations of a man, apparently standing *on* the water, and drifting rapidly down the stream. On nearer approach he proved to be a fisherman, standing up to his ankles in water on a raft of wickerwork barely large enough to sustain his weight, and employed in fishing the river with his casting-net.

At Salamūn, as in most villages, a public "mahdieh" or ferry supplies the necessary means of transit from one bank to another; the ferry-boat usually being large enough to pass over, not only passengers, but camels, horses, and other live stock. A little higher up the canal is the village of Dekerniss, from the water looking bright and clean, but pervaded with an overpowering smell of "fessīkh," of which it is a great

[1] Tom-tom. [2] Tambourine.

THE VILLAGE OF SALAMŪN

distributing centre. I visited the market-place, which I found to be rather more than usually picturesque, especially in the number of women seated in long rows on the ground, and offering for sale a great variety of articles, from cotton prints and glass bangles to antimony and scents. Many were engaged in grinding antimony into the "kohl" used by all women in the shading of their eyes and eyebrows. The antimony was ground by means of a mortar and pestle made of brass; most of them were quaint in form and of great age, and on being struck rang like a bell. After some good-humoured bargaining I secured one, and found its great weight added considerably to my baggage for the rest of the journey. Many of these women wore veils on which were stitched gold and silver coins, probably their dowry on marriage; others had strings of coins or gold ornaments attached to the "mandil," or scarf, which bound the head. One I particularly noticed, evidently an heiress, the weight of whose fortune depending from her head-dress almost prevented her walking upright. People hereabouts are evidently well-to-do, and many thriving shops adorned the town: among others was a very well-equipped "Apothecaries' Hall," where, on the invitation of the chemist, we enjoyed a light meal.

Here also are made a great many figured and coloured mats, some of great size, and mostly of good design. The weaving-sheds were large and airy, and it was interesting to watch the work proceeding. The weaver is assisted by one or more little boys,

who work with the greatest dexterity and speed, the choice of colours and form of the pattern being given by the master, who, working entirely from memory, gives instructions to the boys by numbers which determine the colour of the grass used, and the number of threads of the warp to be taken up in forming the pattern.

On leaving Dekerniss, a steam-launch which plies between Mansūrah and Menzala threw on board our boat a bundle of letters, which recalls to my mind my indebtedness to several of the Government departments who have kindly undertaken to forward me my correspondence, a difficult task sometimes in the case of any one leading a nomadic life. I may give one instance which occurred a few years ago, when a letter forwarded originally to Fakūs had followed me from point to point for some weeks, and was eventually delivered to me by a camel-man as I was seated enjoying an *al-fresco* lunch under a palm-tree. The letter proved to be nothing more than a dinner invitation long since out of date, but I mention the incident as an instance of the extreme kindness of officials and natives in the matter.

The navigable canals in Egypt are numerous. The Bahr-el-Bukr (or river of bullocks) and the Bahr Moëse (river of Moses) are large streams which, with the Bahr Fakūs water, form a highway for a great portion of the Sharkiyeh and Dekkalieh provinces: good streams of running water, which, though not presenting the animated life of many other waterways

in Egypt, have still an interest of their own in the water-borne traffic they carry.

The Bahr Moëse eventually debouches into Lake Menzala, fishing-boats from whence frequently enter and fish its waters. On one of my journeys our party arrived at the banks of this canal at a point too deep for fording, and entirely devoid of any means of transit. As it was necessary that we should cross, we were rather at a loss what to do. Presently there approached a fishing-boat netting the stream, and on our hailing the crew they quickly hauled in their nets and prepared to ferry us across. The precipitous banks, rendered slippery by the splashing water, made it no easy task to transfer our camels, horses, and donkeys from the high bank to the boat below them. After much excitement, and with a great deal of trouble, our beasts, camp equipment, and ourselves were safely landed on the other side. The operation, however, necessitated three journeys of the boat, and consequent loss of a couple of hours of daylight for the fishermen. Upon our offering to reward them for their services, they declined all payment, saying that "Allah had allowed them to befriend the wayfarer, and he would reward them"; and a few minutes later their nets were again in the water and the fishermen working as though no interruption had occurred.

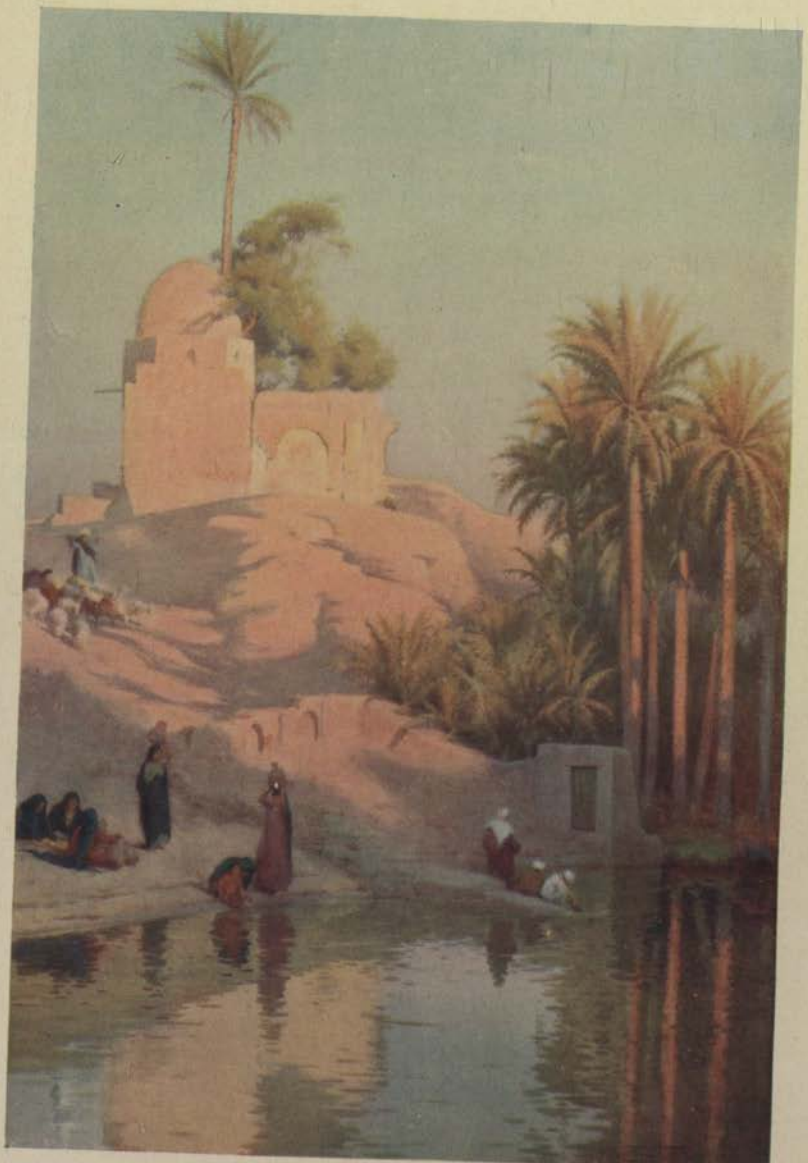
The Ismailia Canal, which connects Zagazig with Ismailia, is another fine stream; often busy with passing craft, though usually peaceful in its character, and, to those inclined for sport, able occasionally to provide

a good day's duck-shooting. One of the most interesting of all the canals in Egypt, however, is the Bahr Yusef in Fayūm, which is fed by the Nile at Assiūt, 200 miles away. Originally built in the time of Rameses by Joseph, whose name it bears, it still supplies the province with a rushing stream of drinking-water, which encircles the whole town of Medinet-el-Fayūm, and on whose banks are some of the most picturesque canal scenery to be met with.

This province of Fayūm is one of the few places off the beaten track which is open to the uninitiated visitor. The town has one or more hotels where moderate comfort may be enjoyed, and is connected with Cairo by a regular train service; but should the visitor be obliged to put up with a little inconvenience at times, the beauty of the country is ample compensation, and the feeling of personal freedom enjoyed is sufficient recompense for the loss of any accustomed luxury.

Medinet-el-Fayūm is in many respects a remarkable town, and well worth exploring. Its bazaar, which is the longest in Egypt, is covered for its entire length of 1½ miles, and several times crosses the various canals on bridges. Picturesque at all times, I saw it some years ago when decorated in honour of the Khedive's visit, and it really was a remarkable sight. Though the Egyptian is always clever at decoration, the people of Fayūm excelled on this occasion. Triumphal arches, gay with flags and coloured lanterns, reached the roofs at intervals; the shop-fronts were brilliant with rich hangings and trophies of plants and flowers; crimson-

IN THE OASIS OF FAYŪM



covered stands and embroidered tents gave accommodation to the well-to-do, whose waiting was beguiled by light refreshments and the music of the bands with which each was provided; while the whole roadway was covered with clean desert sand, and lined by the populace clad in holiday garb. It was a splendid vista of animation and colour, and the effect of these thousands "salaaming" to the ground as the Khedive passed was most striking.

At night there were illuminations in which many thousands of small lamps were used; every street and lane of the town was ablaze with light, and on the canals, not only were the banks and bridges fringed with coloured lights, but the very boughs of trees were similarly outlined.

One shop I noticed was very curiously adorned. It was a fruit-shop, and the uprights of its front were decked with palm-leaves, and between them, hung as a festoon, were a couple of enormous fish. These were of such an unusual size that I had them photographed, with the shopkeeper standing beside them to give the scale. I sent the photograph to an eminent naturalist, who, in thanking me, observed that the photograph was interesting "as showing the *lying* propensity of the camera! The fish depicted are," he said, "of the *perch* tribe, and would appear to be about 6 feet in length and 160 lbs. or so in weight, which is absurd!" On my assuring him that the fish *were* as large as he described, and were constantly caught in the neighbouring lake of

Birket-el-Kurūn, my friend made a special journey to the Fayūm, and was successful in securing some equally large specimens, which are now, I understand, in the British Museum.

Canal scenery, however, has an interest of its own quite apart from passing incident, and this is especially so in the case of the smaller canals not open for navigation. Pitch your tent upon the banks of one of these, and enjoy its changing pictures. Undisturbed by traffic, the banks support a wilder and more luxuriant growth than in the larger streams, and water-lilies and other aquatic plants float upon its placid surface. In the early morning the thistles and wild-flowers which fringe it are laden with the dew, which hangs heavy upon the cobwebs which festoon them; every leaf and blade of grass has its glittering point of light, soon to be evaporated by the newly risen sun. The water is a sheet of silver, over which a low mist hangs, partially screening the wooded landscape beyond. All nature is silent, and no sign of life is seen except where the water-beetle sports, or a rising fish silently breaks the limpid water with a streak of light.

Presently insect-life awakes, and the chirrup of the grasshopper and the drone of bees fill the air, now warm in the sunshine. The morning breeze sends a purple ripple down the stream, and the dew and the mist have disappeared to form those tiny flecks of white which float between the earth and the eternal blue of the sky above you. The distant lowing of cattle or the bleat of sheep marks the beginning of another day of

BY STILL WATERS

work, and prove the fields re-peopled. Reeds and branches swing slowly in the quiet air, and their gentle "swish" as the breeze passes is soothing to senses almost lulled to sleep. With the heat of day come the thirsty cattle or tired buffalo to wallow in the stream ere they recommence their toil, and the king-fisher, as ever, flashes his gay plumage in the sun as he darts from bank to stream.

These are pictures of drowsy peacefulness which soon give place to the glory of the sunset. Rich verdure stretches as far as the eye can reach, deep and strong in colour close to you, but purple in the distance against the orange sky. The patches of ploughed land look black against the foliage, from which the smoke-laden village is separated by a golden haze. Palms and tamarisks tell strongly against the evening sky, which is hardly less bright than the glowing point of light which marks the kindling of a sakkia fire. As the night deepens, detail is lost in the gathering gloom. The sky on the horizon still retains something of sunset glow, which melts through rose and violet into the pure depth of blue overhead. A crescent moon, with attendant star, shines crisp and clear in the vault, where, one by one, other stars appear to mark the approach of night. With drooping arms, palm-trees beckon to their reflections in the water at your feet, as though in pleasure that the heat of day is over. Sakkias have stopped their groaning, and only the cry of a night-bird or the croaking of the frogs breaks the stillness. The whole transition

is a continuous delight, in which form and colour and changing atmospheric effect fill every hour of the day with picture subjects hardly possible of attainment.

What could be more restful than the camp life to be enjoyed beside these quiet waterways, where nothing is found to mar the poetic beauty of surroundings which the quiet water alternately repeats or foils!

CHAPTER X

RIDING THROUGH THE LAND OF GOSHEN

ANY visitor having studied all that we have hitherto seen of Egypt may not unnaturally pretend to some knowledge of the country and its people. His knowledge, however, is only partial, and the people he has mixed with should not be accepted as entirely typical.

Beyond everything else, Egypt is an agricultural country, and the "fellahīn" (or "soil-cutters," as the word means), who number about four-fifths of the total population, are its representative class. Descendants of the ancient Egyptians in type and feature, the fellahīn closely resemble the sculptured figures of the monuments, and, in spite of periodical mixtures of other blood, remain to-day practically the same as they were three thousand years ago.

Among these hard-working agriculturalists is preserved much of that old-world courtesy and simplicity of religion which counts hospitality to the stranger among its imperative virtues.

Any real knowledge of the people can only be gained by visiting the large agricultural provinces of

the Delta, where, by living among them in all their primitive surroundings, an insight into their character and habits is acquired which would be impossible in any other way.

As being typical of all, let me describe the life of the "fellah" as found in the province of Sharkiyeh, or Eastern province, of the Delta. This is practically the land of Goshen, and still retains many traces of Israelitish days. Here the tourist is unknown, and the busy whirl of latter-day civilisation has hardly yet penetrated to districts whose inhabitants contentedly follow lives of patriarchal simplicity.

My headquarters here have usually been at Fakūs, a thriving market-town in the centre of the province, beautifully situated at the junction of two large canals, and surrounded by the green fields and palm-groves so characteristic of this part of Egypt.

Here I made the acquaintance of the leading landowner, Sheykh Mohammed Abdūn, Sheykh of the town, and a model of all that hospitality and integrity should be.

I had just arrived from Cairo, and was putting up at the Irrigation Rest House as the guest of a Government servant temporarily quartered there. My advent proved a serious strain upon the commissariat department; and as it was after sunset, there seemed slight prospect of our being able to replenish. All anxiety on this score, however, was removed by the arrival of messengers, who, presenting the "salaams" of the Sheykh, begged the honour of our company at dinner.

EVENING AT FAKŪS

Guided by the servants, who carried lamps, we had to stumble over a rough bridle-path for a mile or more to the Sheykh's house, prettily situated on a canal-bank, and surrounded by palm-trees and fruit-gardens.

Sheykh Mohammed met us at the gate of his compound, and, kissing us on both cheeks, made us welcome, saying that he was honoured by the presence of Englishmen in his house. The gate opened into a square courtyard; on the left, a divan and other offices, while on the right were the kitchens and the servants' quarters. In the centre was a well, and beyond, the guest-chamber opened by arches into the compound.

Entering the divan, coffee and cigarettes were served while dinner was being prepared. The Sheykh's brother and other guests soon arrived, and, exchanging the usual greetings, we sat down cross-legged upon the couches awaiting the advent of dinner. Presently the servant informed our host that the dinner was ready, and, asking us if we were agreeable, the Sheykh led the way into the guest-room. This was a long narrow room, some thirty feet by fifteen, one side of which was practically opened to the night air. The walls and floor were of sun-dried mud, a raised "dekka" (or bench) of the same material running round the three sides of the room; carpets and cushions were spread upon the "dekka," and matting covered a portion of the sanded floor. The roof was thatched with "doura"[1] stalks, from the beam hung two or three lanterns, and in a niche in the wall stood the drinking-

[1] Indian corn.

pots and vessels for ablutions ; the room in other respects being devoid of furniture or decoration.

Before sitting to eat, all are expected to wash in public. A servant, holding a basin in his hand, pours water from a jug while you wash your face and hands ;[1] then rinsing your mouth and sniffing water into your nostrils, you are ready to take your place at the "sahniyeh," a low brass tray on which the dinner is served, using your towel as a napkin during the meal. Meanwhile a large fire of corn-cobs and cotton-stalks has been kindled in the courtyard, and one by one silent and ghostly figures appear from the distant gloom and squat down to watch the strangers.

As a specimen of the fare a hospitable host will provide for his guests, let me describe this meal rather fully.

The "sahniyeh" is covered with victuals, each place being marked by a pile of thin loaves which serve the double purpose of plate as well as food, and piles of radishes, lettuces, and small dishes of stewed vegetables surround the central dish. I noticed that the Sheykh had procured for me a knife, fork, and plate ; but, wishing to compliment him, I called a servant, and, to the delight of every one, told him to take them away, as I did not need them. My host was charmed, and again embracing me exclaimed, "Here is an Englishman who understands us : he eats with his hands !" This episode put me for ever in my host's good graces, and secured

[1] The jug and basin, called "Tisht-wa-Abrik," are of copper or brass, and are of an elegant though curious form.

for me more than one admiring friend. To return to the dinner, here is the "menu" provided on this occasion, each course being served separately:

1. Soup, rather greasy, to which was added a bowl of "semna" (or clarified butter), the whole very oily, but rendered more palatable by the juice of several lemons squeezed into it.
2. Salads.
3. Baked turkey, stuffed with rice and nuts.
4. Spinach and oil.
5. Haricot beans.
6. Boiled beef.
7. Chops.
8. Sheep's brains.
9. A dish called "malfūf," consisting of rolled vine-leaves containing minced meat and spices tied round with the tendril and stewed with oil.
10. Mutton hash.
11. Fried potatoes.
12. A pudding made of fine flour, honey, and oil.

Here one would naturally suppose the meal ended, and it was a little disconcerting to be suddenly confronted with—

13. Sausages.
14. Stuffed tomatoes.
15. Boiled mutton.
16. More fried potatoes.
17. "Mish-mish" (stewed apricots).
18. A huge fish.

19. Knuckle of veal.
20. "Riz-bi-leban," the usual rice and milk which invariably concludes a meal.

While eating, servants stood behind us, some with lanterns, others with jars of rose-scented drinking-water from which each one drank from time to time. With the exception of the soup and the rice, which were eaten with the same spoon, all food is taken with the *right* hand, host and guest exchanging choice morsels from time to time. Everything was excellently cooked and served, and a certain amount of pretty ceremony characterised the meal.

For the benefit of any who may be privileged to be thus feasted, let me mention one point of table etiquette, namely, that the diner should never eat of *every* dish, or his host, supposing that he has not been satisfied, will order the menu to be repeated from the beginning! It may also be worth remembering that the penultimate dish always consists of *bones* in some form, such as ribs or knuckle; this is a warning to the diner that only rice is to follow, so that now, or not at all, his appetite must be appeased.

Rising independently as each one finishes, the same ceremonial washing is repeated.

Our meal over, the servants and villagers present finish all that remains of the repast, while we enjoy our coffee and cigarettes among the cushions of the divan. Fortunately politeness does not compel conversation, and the guests if so wishful may rest in silence. Presently rising and bidding our host "good night," we

were conducted by him to the outer gate, again embraced, and with a further exchange of compliments took our departure.

Sometimes at great feasts a sheep, stuffed with rice, nuts, and pigeons, is cooked whole, and forms the *pièce de résistance;* though among the poor the fare is of the simplest kind, and consists usually of bread and sugar-cane, varied by an occasional dish of cheese or eggs, or perhaps a fish caught in a neigbouring canal.

In painting one of my subjects here, necessity compelled me to set up my easel on a sloping bank of rubbish, a very uncomfortable position, but which happened to be the only point from which I could get my view. The usual crowd surrounded me and in various ways offered their services: one man would bring an umbrella to hold over me, and another a jar of water; a small boy held my paint-box, while a second kept up a vigorous assault on the flies with his "minasha."[1] Did a dog bark derisively, a stone thrown with unerring aim changed his mirth to mourning, while those who could find for themselves no specific occupation assumed responsibility for the behaviour of their fellows. Coffee would be brought, and all sorts of suggestions made for my comfort. "Why," said one, "does the Effendi sit all day in the sun working? If I were he I would make some one do it for me!" And another begged me to come and sit in the field, where it was cleaner, quite regardless of the fact that from there I could not see my subject at all! Frequently, also, when working

[1] Fly-whisk.

in the fields some distance from the town, fruit or sweetmeats would be brought to me, the good-natured "fellah" squatting before me, delighted with my evident relish of the refreshment. So the days passed, and when sundown closed my day's work I would be assisted to the Rest House, where, solemnly shaking hands with my friends and wishing each other "good night," we part till to-morrow, when the whole performance is repeated.

There is something touching in the simple kindness of these people. Their hospitality and kindly offices are rendered as a matter of course, for which the only reward expected is that you will condescend to accept the tribute of respect they offer. Such was my life at Fakūs, each day's busy enjoyment being graced by some little act of civility which made work easy, and which has left with me a very pleasing recollection of the good folk of the village.

Here also I had the good fortune to make the friendship of M'Collough Bey, then engaged upon a land survey, to whose companionship through many long and sometimes trying rides I owe so much of my pleasure on these journeys, while his perfect knowledge of the language and customs of the people has greatly added to the information several years of wandering in these districts has brought me.

The morning arrived when I was to leave Fakūs, and with it a fresh proof of the Sheykh's kindness, in the form of a handsome donkey intended specially to carry my baggage. It is one of those silvery mornings

peculiar to an Egyptian spring. A thin film through which the early sun is struggling covers the sky, except where, low down on the horizon, a glint of blue shines with a promise of heat and brilliance later on. Everything looks soft in the tender light, and the distant belt of palm-trees rises mistily above the dew-bespangled fields. On the right is the smoke of a camp fire, and the quiet canal water, repeating the grey sky above, completes a scheme of silver which is only emphasised by the coloured head-dresses of our attendants and the gay trappings of their horses.

The surrounding country is a flat expanse of green fields and ripening corn, broken frequently by palm-groves and clumps of tamarisk-trees, in which nestle the little farmsteads of the people, innocent of anything in the shape of hedgerow or boundary marks.

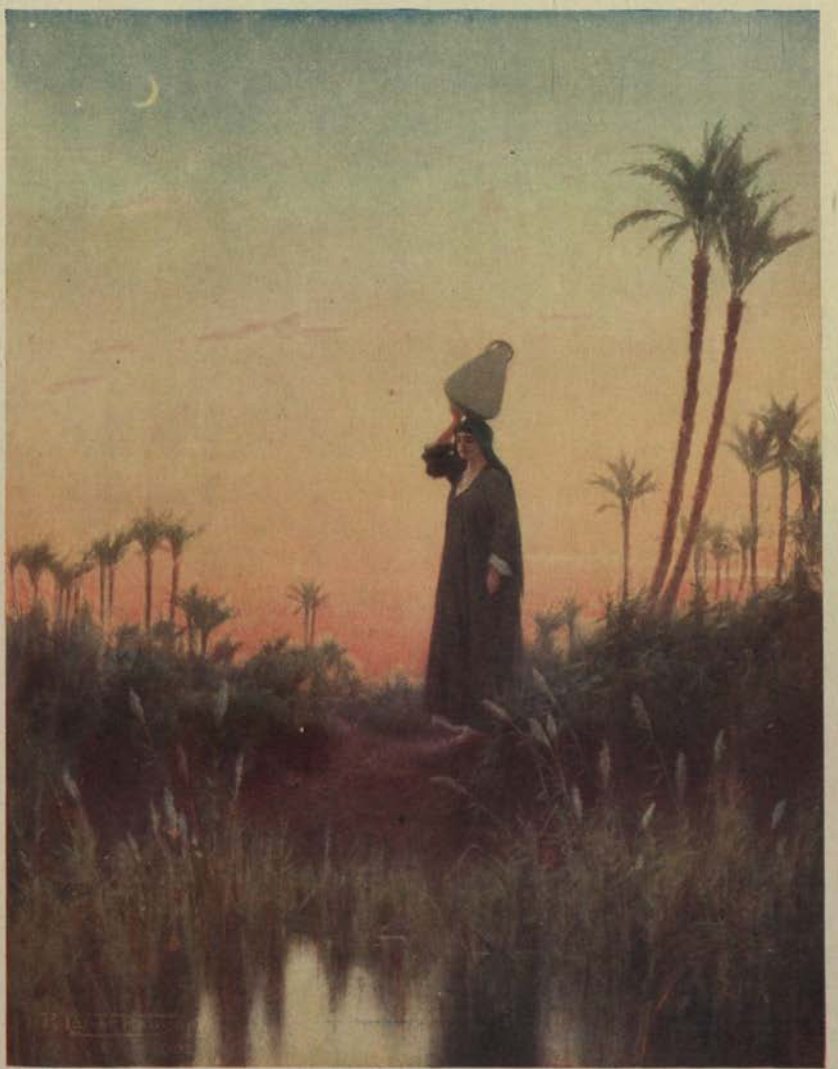
Speaking generally, the country districts of Egypt have few roads, their place being taken by large arterial canals which are usually navigable. Their high banks, also, well beaten by camel tread or hoof of cattle, form excellent paths for man and beast, and, except during rain, when they become dangerously slippery, are perfect riding-tracks for the horseman. Usually the canals are well wooded with shade trees, among which the sycamore, oak, tamarisk, and mimosa are the most common. On the banks are the frequent shadoof, and in the fields are sakkias worked by a buffalo which a small boy encourages to keep awake by the aid of a long whip of hide. You will notice that these animals are always blindfolded to prevent dizzi-

ness, and it is said that once these animals are put to sakkia work they never again see the sun. Here is a pretty "esbeh" shaded by mulberries and perhaps surrounded by a vine-walk. In the fields Isaac drives his yoke of oxen, while Rebecca leads her flock to water, or again, Rachel, "balass" on head, walks majestically and gracefully in quest of her domestic water-supply. It is all very Scriptural, and the very life and conversation of the people repeat those of the Old Testament.

Away from the canal itself, the water is carried in little channels to all parts of the field, and these narrow banks again form the only defined pathway through the cultivated lands.

As you ride along the people press upon you offers of hospitality in some form, and importune the traveller to "honour the house by breaking bread in it." One such invitation I remember very well. The farmhouse in question stood on the opposite side of the canal, and its owner, who was resting beneath the shade of the fig-tree which overshadowed it, rose and begged us to rest and have some refreshment. We declined the polite offer, but he, exclaiming that we should never pass *his* "esbeh" without eating, mounted his horse and chased us until we were forced to return and do him this honour. This man, Shelil-en-Nebraishi by name, had been exiled from Egypt and took service with the Mahdi; he commanded a regiment of cavalry during the early stages of the Mahdist rising, but deserted and returned to Egypt on the appearance of the English, with whom he said he had no quarrel.

RACHEL



The delay caused by this entertainment compelled us to quit the canal-bank and make the best of a straight course across the fields to Kahbūna, where we proposed to stay the night. The winding pathways of the fields, however, render it easy to mistake your way, and we were a little uncertain as to the direction we should take. Presently meeting a boy herding goats, we asked him were we right for Kahbūna. "Yes, your excellency," he replied, "and had we known you were coming this way we would have had a road made straight for you." This reply was made in all seriousness, and is a pretty instance of the graceful imagery of the East, which permeates all classes of society, and certainly, among the poor fellahīn of Egypt, lends poetry to lives which are otherwise largely those of drudgery and toil.

As we approach Kahbūna the country becomes increasingly beautiful, the groves of date-palms are more frequent and larger in extent—indeed, in many parts they become almost one continuous forest, through which wind tortuous paths and channels of running water. Between the rows of palms, bercime or vegetables grow, and the occasional open stretches through which we pass are bright with the blossom of the bean-fields, whose fragrance scents the whole air.

On nearing the village the pathway widens into a broad beaten track of sandy soil, well shaded by the surrounding palm-trees, and leading to the principal entrance of the village, which lies in the middle of a particularly dense grove. In such out-of-the-way

villages as these, European visitors are almost unknown, and the inhabitants are amongst the most simple of these primitive people. On our approach, of which the men in the fields had given warning, the Omdeh and headmen of the village met us on the outskirts; their pleasure on our arrival was great, and exclaiming "What honour for our village!" and "You bring a blessing on the house!" they kissed our hands and stirrup-irons and bade us welcome, and acting as our guides led us through the trees to the principal gate of the village.

Kahbūna, being a typical "fellah" village, may be described rather fully. The outside walls, made of sun-dried mud, are practically without doors or windows, and have rather the appearance of a line of fortifications, the narrow lanes of the village terminating in heavy wooden doors closed at nightfall, and guarded from the inside by the village watchmen. The mud-huts of which the village consists are usually of one story, the roofs being covered with heaps of cotton and "doura" stalks, stored there as fuel. Space being limited, the houses usually adjoin, leaving narrow lanes where necessary, which form the only thoroughfares of the town.

Roaming at will over the house-tops are sheep, goats, and the half-wild dog common to all these villages. Occasionally an upper story is built to houses of greater importance, and here and there are square towers, erected to accommodate the thousands of pigeons whirling overhead. Frequently these lanes end abruptly

A FELLAH VILLAGE

in the courtyard of some dwelling, and it is difficult at first for the stranger to find his way about the village.

As a rule, the houses have one small door opening into the lane, this being frequently the only means of egress and ventilation. The windows (when they occur) are merely openings in the wall devoid of glass or shutter, in place of which a lattice of split bamboo or palm-stalks placed crosswise is built in during the construction of the house. The narrowness of the streets prevents any free circulation of air, while the smoke of the fires of dung or corn-cobs fills the houses and hangs heavy in the lanes. Yet, in spite of this apparently deliberate effort to exclude air, the people seem well-conditioned and healthy, their occupation being in the fields, and their homes simply serving the purpose of eating-room or chamber. As I have mentioned, several of the principal houses are dignified by an upper story, in which some relief at least is possible from the heavy air below, and where the passing breeze protects you to some extent from the irritation of the myriads of flies which swarm everywhere. Needless to say, other forms of insect-life occur, whose tortures have to be endured in patience by the unclimatised visitor. Immediately inside the gate was the "mandāra" or guest-room, as usual open to the air on one side, and in most respects the same as that already described at Fakūs, though of less size and importance. Opposite, across the lane, is a similar room where lodge the "guffrah" of the village. As it gets dark, the fire is lit by the watchmen, while lamps are placed in the

"mandāra," and, preceded by the usual washing, dinner is served. Very different from that provided by Sheykh Mohammed Abdūn, the fare here proved to be poor, and consisted solely of a pyramid of rice on which were distributed a few rather lean pieces of mutton. The inevitable "riz-bi-leban" followed; and as both dishes were strongly flavoured by the pungent smoke of the fires, it will be readily understood that a keen appetite is necessary before one can enjoy such a meal as this. As is always the case, the coffee, by its excellence, made amends for the dinner itself. The old Sheykh of the village joined us at the meal, and, after eating a little, made way for his son to do the same, etiquette forbidding both father and son to eat with a stranger at the same time.

Presently I was conducted to my bedroom, guided by a "gaffir," who carried a long stick and a lantern. As we proceeded down the narrow lane, the dogs, running alongside on the roofs, would constantly snap at us and had to be repeatedly beaten off. My room was merely a cupboard, about six feet square, without window or, so far as I could see, any ventilation whatever, except the heavy door, which locked on the outside. The interior of the room was mainly occupied by a daïs of mud on which the mattress was spread. Beneath was an opening which proved to be the fireplace, but without a chimney, and before I could prevent him my conductor had lit the rubbish it contained, the pungent smoke from which very quickly drove me into the street.

Everything was quiet, and in the darkness I could see little, the roadway being roofed by a thatch of some kind, which prevented the starlight penetrating. After groping about in the dark, I stumbled upon a raised platform of earth, on which, rolled up in my blanket, I went to sleep. On awakening in the morning I discovered that my impromptu bedchamber was simply a small courtyard which formed a kitchen, the common property of two or three adjacent houses, and that I was sleeping on an earth-oven, the fire of which some one had just set alight. On discovering me, the women immediately fled, but presently the Omdeh and his headmen came to offer their "salaams" and to inquire as to my comfort during the night. I was able to assure him that I had slept well, and was quite ready for breakfast. During the day I made a sketch of my curious bedroom, a proceeding which excited considerable interest among the onlookers. "Why," said one man to the Omdeh, "is the Effendi painting this poor place?" "Hush," said the Omdeh, "he is a friend of the Queen's, and he will take the picture to her and say, 'See, your Majesty, what poor houses these people live in,' and she will reply, 'Yes, poor fellows, here is £500; go and tell them to build better ones!'"

Outside the village were several extremely beautiful subjects. The mud of which the buildings are composed had been excavated on the spot, the hollow so caused filling up with infiltrated water, forming a large "birkeh" or pool, which partly encircled the town. These "birkeh" are invariably found in conjunction

with the villages, and quickly become open cesspools into which all the offal of the place is cast. As though this were not enough, the people of Kahbūna had placed their village cemetery on its brink; and though the curious domes and tombstones of the departed no doubt added to the picturesqueness of the scene, this hardly conduced to the health of the village, which drew a portion at least of its drinking-water from the pool.

Of late the Government have been making strenuous efforts to have all these pools filled and the cemeteries removed to better sites at a distance; and the last time that I visited Kahbūna I found that this order had been carried out, and the pool no longer remained to add beauty to the landscape by its reflection of town and date-grove.

While always finding the male inhabitants curiously interested in my work, the women, on the other hand, were excessively shy, and as I passed them in the street they would turn their faces to the wall and gather their children to them, lest the "evil eye" of the Christian should bring disaster upon them. I found, however, that after a time this restraint broke down, and in the end I was able to get models for my pictures from among the young women of the place.

The men I found to be usually well set-up and handsome; the women, occasionally beautiful when young, on approaching middle age become plain to a degree, and one almost regrets that, no doubt owing to the exigencies of their field-work, the use of the veil is dispensed with.

Some villages which I have visited are almost too filthy for endurance. At El Ghazali, for instance, the guest-chamber placed at my disposal was erected on the edge of a "birkeh" more than usually foul, while the cracks and crevices of its interior walls were filled by the nests of wild bees and its floor alive with lice. Though very beautiful in its situation and surroundings, one night at El Ghazali proved enough for me, and, dispensing with refreshment of any kind, I made an early departure.

In most of the villages where I have stayed the accommodation provided has usually been tolerable, and frequently good. Any one, however, in search of the picturesque must be prepared to put up with inconvenience and discomfort in return for so much of beauty and pictorial interest. The greatest privation is probably the uncertainty and varying quality of your meals, and I have always found it a wise plan when travelling in the country to eat as much as you can when food is obtainable, as your next meal is always a matter of uncertainty.

Usually rising with the sun, a cup of coffee is always procurable, and sometimes a small cake or piece of bread. During the day it is usually possible to obtain some light refreshment, such as boiled eggs, bread, and coffee, though as a rule no substantial meal is prepared until nightfall, when the diner is apparently expected to provide himself with nourishment for the next twenty-four hours. When one's days are spent in horse-riding and open-air work, it will readily be understood that

hunger is a constant companion, and the appetite not too discriminating when the nightly meal is served. Above all, a taste for "semna" must be acquired, as everything, from soup to sweetmeats, is more or less impregnated with it. Poor though their food frequently is, it is ungrudgingly offered, and is usually the best obtainable.

It must not be supposed that one has always to "rough it" as the guest of a village. Though frequently being obliged to put up with wretched food and lodging, on many other occasions I have found myself in excellent quarters, where not only was the food provided liberal and of good quality, but the guest-chamber was also quite beyond reproach. In particular I may mention the village of Sanēta, in the eastern part of the Sharkiyeh, where, surrounded by rich arable land, the village is built upon a "ghezireh" (or island of sand). Though built of mud as usual, the material had to be brought from a distance, so that no stagnant pool exists, while the ordinary drainage from the village is quickly absorbed in the sand. Consequently healthier than others, its inhabitants also seemed to be more manly, and, most unusual among fellahīn, were fond of horses, which they bred. The high ghezireh was of considerable extent, and formed a splendid field for horse exercise, and races were frequently arranged.

It was often hot out on the sand, and work was occasionally carried on under considerable difficulties. I heard the Sheykh one day say to my companion, "Why does the Bey sit there in the sun? If I were

he I would paint in the house, and when I returned to England say, 'See, this is Egypt.' But this man must have every leaf exact!"

On leaving the village I wished to make some return for the great kindness the Sheykh had shown me. All that he would permit, however, was that I should paint his portrait, which, when finished, was carried in procession to the mosque and hung there!

A pleasant variation to this village-life occasionally occurred when I happened upon the tents of a party of finance-inspectors engaged in tax-assessment and the sale of Government land. The cool air of the tents proved very grateful after the closeness of the village mandāra, while the food, though in many cases the same, tasted much better when eaten in the open. I remember on one occasion a most delicious lunch of roast turkey and pigeons being served for us under the shade of some palm-trees, and it was interesting to watch the skilful way in which, without the aid of knife or fork, the bird was divided. First the legs and wings were broken off, then by inserting the thumb inside the "merry-thought," it was torn off, after which the white meat of the breast is easily stripped from the bone in long pieces, like peeling a banana. In the same way, if cooked whole, a sheep or a kid will be divided, an operation requiring considerable skill and practice, and, owing to the great heat of the roasted meat, the honour of presiding over the meal is hardly one to be coveted. I have done it myself, but at the expense of almost blistered hands and fingers. Stuffed pigeons are another

frequent dish; and, when time was pressing, I have occasionally made my meal of hard-boiled eggs served floating in a dish of oil.

While mentioning examples of native hospitality and kindness, I must not forget two particular incidents which occur to my mind, and which will show to what an amount of trouble the native will put himself in order to be obliging. I had been in the provinces some little time, and had entirely exhausted my supply of tobacco. Halting at a village, I asked the Sheykh if he could supply me; he replied that though he had tobacco it was not fit for "his excellency" to smoke, but that if I would condescend to become his guest for the time-being he would be able to supply me shortly. It seems almost incredible that the Sheykh straightway despatched a servant on camel-back to Zagazig with instructions to buy an "oke"[1] of the best Turkish tobacco to be had there. It was the third day before the journey was completed, and the Sheykh enabled to present me with a "smoke" suitable to my station! The other case was that of a poor man, the floor of whose hut was covered by felted rugs of the most simple kind, and decorated by barbaric ornaments in red and yellow paint. Out of mere curiosity I inquired where they came from, as I had seen nothing like them before. I was informed they were made in the Sūdan, and there the matter dropped. During the following summer, after my return to England, a parcel arrived from Egypt, forwarded to me

[1] About 2¾ lbs.

by the Ministry of Finance, which, on being opened, proved to contain a couple of these rugs, which the poor man by some means or other had obtained for me and forwarded with his respectful "salaams." Unfortunately, being greasy, they were so full of grubs and moths on arrival that they had to be immediately burnt. Here at any rate is one case where no question of a reward could have prompted the gift, and as a matter of fact I have never again seen the man or had an opportunity of thanking him.

Like all ignorant people, the fellahīn are superstitious, and on many doorways will be painted "the bloody hand" as a charm against the "evil eye." Others have the legend, "B'ism'llah, ma' sha' 'llah" (In the name of God, may God keep evil from it), and in the case of some of the more important houses the brass or iron door-knockers are similarly inscribed. Many houses have tiny windmills affixed to them, or images of men whose arms revolve in the breeze; these are to frighten away the evil spirits. One of the most prevalent superstitions refers to snakes. At one village at which I stayed I discovered a cobra coiled up in the thatch above my bed. I naturally objected to its company, but was assured by my host that it was so well fed as to be harmless! On inquiring why it was not killed, I was informed that it was unlucky to kill a snake in a house; and so general is this belief, that I understand that in the native houses of Cairo may be found cobra, which

are confined to one room, and so constantly supplied with food as to be perpetually in a comatose condition.

Similarly, there is a proverb which says, "God blesses the house the birds build in," and I have frequently noticed swallows' nests built in the most inconvenient positions in their living-rooms. As an instance of the respect a native will pay to such a superstition, I may mention a case which affected me personally. My servant had been in the habit of making my early coffee in a silver jug, and one morning its place was taken by a commoner vessel. Asking the reason, my boy informed me that during the night a pair of birds had commenced to build in it, and it could not therefore be disturbed. The idea was so pretty that I felt forced to accept the position.

Riding through the country districts is most interesting, and the incidents met with on the road are frequently amusing. Here comes a donkey so heavily laden with bercime that little is to be seen of it but nose and hoofs. Sitting on the piled-up green-stuff is a man with his little boy on his lap. Quite unable to see, the donkey accidentally bumps his outstretching load against a palm trunk, and the next instant the positions are reversed, the donkey's heels in the air and the man and child struggling from beneath the beast and its inverted load. Another time I saw a camel, heavily laden with sugar-cane, attempting to cross the rough bridge of palm trunks which spanned a deep but narrow canal. Slipping on the insecure footing, the

IN THE LAND OF GOSHEN—EVENING

laden animal rolled over into the water, some six feet below, and were it not for the length of its neck, which enabled it to keep its nose above the water, would most certainly have been drowned, the canes having stuck in the narrow channel and effectually pinned it in its uncomfortable position. It was not until its driver had jumped into the water and cut the cords which secured it to its load that the camel was enabled to right itself, and, after many fruitless efforts, eventually succeeded in climbing the steep canal-bank, rendered all the more slippery by its own dripping condition.

The greetings of the wayfarers also add materially to the pleasure of your ride: no travellers can pass each other without exchanging courteous greetings, all of which have a more or less Biblical flavour :— "Naharak said!" (May your day be blessed!), "Said embarak!" (May to-day be as blessed as yesterday!), "Salaam alēkom!" (Peace to you all!), "Allah salimak!" (God bless you!), and so on; a request will be preceded by such terms as "Amil marūf" (Do me the favour), or "Min fadlak" (By your courtesy), while the universal response of "Katter kherak!" (May your prosperity be increased!) takes the place of our "Thank you." Sometimes their wish to be agreeable to a stranger is somewhat misleading. You make inquiries as to the distance you are from some given point, and, like the Irishman who thinks "his honour" would like a pleasant reply, the peasant answers, "Bus firket kaab," which means "the turn of a heel only," whereas you will probably

find an hour or more of steady riding necessary before your objective is reached.[1]

As I have endeavoured to show, the country-people are almost universally hospitable and considerate. The only case to the contrary which comes within my own knowledge was once when, on reaching San-el-Haga, our servants, who had been sent to cut bercime for our horses, were assaulted in the field by some of the villagers, who objected to supplying fodder to strangers; and in this case the incivility was punished by a sound beating from the Sheykh.

This incident suggests another point worthy of notice, in the paternal attitude of the sheykh to his villagers; in most cases he is looked up to as the father of his people, and his authority is seldom if ever questioned. I was once present at a land sale where the legal transfer of a plot of land, which had been bought by a local sheykh, was about to be completed, when claim was laid to it by one of his followers. The sheykh, a strong big man with only one eye, said not a word, but, grasping his staff, took a few hasty strides towards him, and, had he not been held back by those around, would probably have brained him. Trembling with indignation, he exclaimed to the inspector, "My Bey, I cannot help it; I must castigate him: he is one of my sheep which I have brought up."

[1] Distances are always reckoned by *time* and not by *miles*. Thus, in response to inquiries, the answer will be, so many hours "by your legs," or so many "by horse."

CHAPTER XI

THE LIFE OF THE "FELLAH"

"In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread" is a truth which is brought home to the minds of all who mix with the *people*, and no one who has lived among the "fellahīn" could fail to be struck by their patient industry.

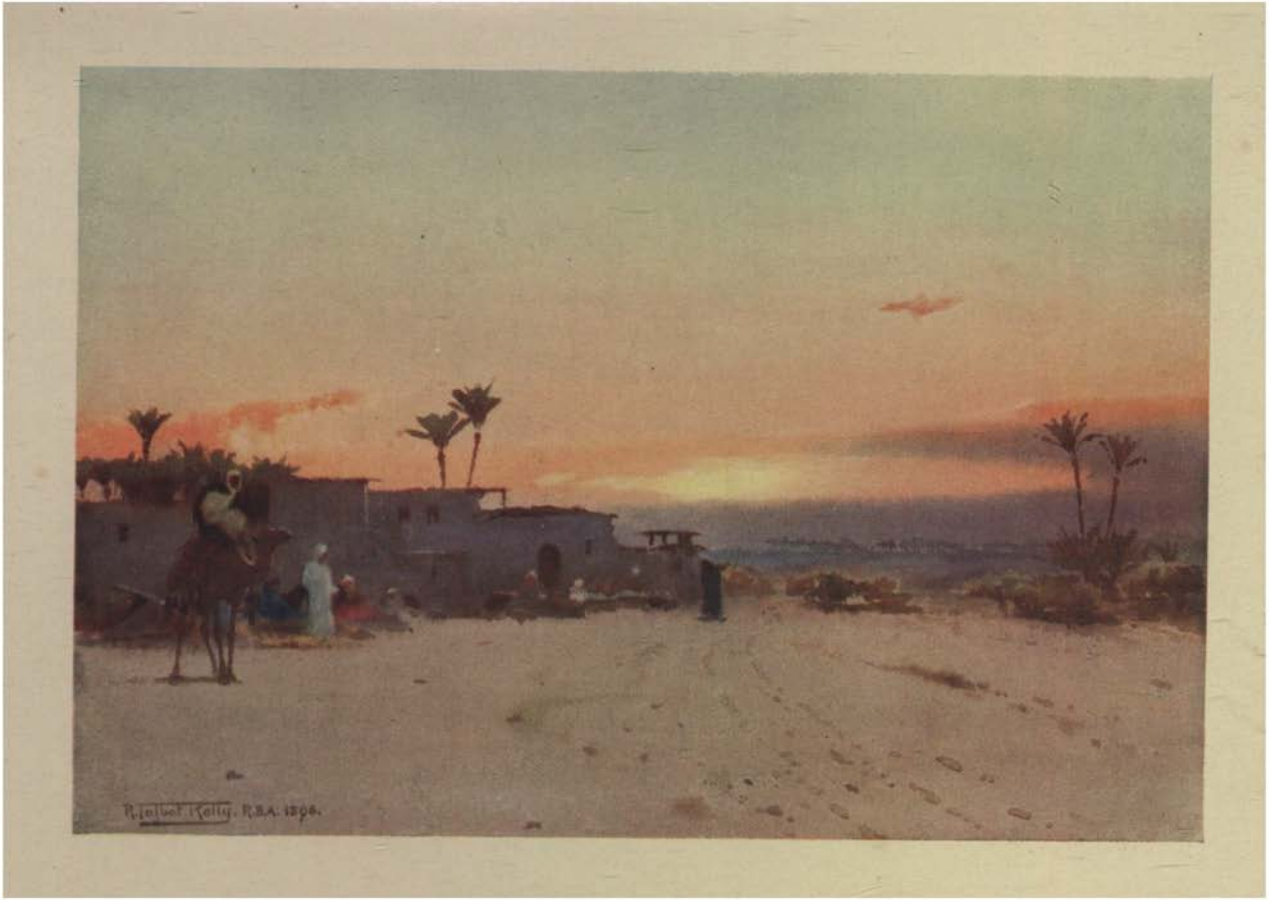
At early dawn man and beast go forth to their labour, and only at nightfall do they cease their indefatigable toil. Thrifty to a degree, not an inch of land is wasted, and it is a matter of common observation that neither grass meadow nor wild-flower may be found in cultivated Egypt, for land which can produce these will support a better crop. Field-work is carried on with the most primitive of implements, but the land is well tilled, and planted with such a rotation of crops as experience has proved most profitable.

To judge by results, the Egyptian would appear to have little to learn in the art of agriculture, and the simple methods employed are evidently most suited to the land. I have known farming syndicates whose property has been equipped with the most modern

machinery, and directed by the best intelligence, absolutely fail to make the land support them. No doubt the knowledge would come in time; but as matters are, none but the "fellah" seems able to coax from the soil its best and richest return.

Though conservative in their methods, they are in some ways adaptable, and steam turbines are recognised as better means of irrigation than the sakkia or shadoof. The old hand-mill has almost entirely disappeared in favour of the steam-engine, and only lack of capital, in the case of the small farmers, serves to perpetuate many other picturesque accessories to their labour which will eventually succumb to modern improvements.

As a rule, all the field operations are picturesque. Ploughing is carried on with the traditional yoke of oxen, though occasionally you may see a camel harnessed with an ox or donkey, or even all three together yoked to the same plough. The plough itself is a very simple implement of wood, with its point iron-shod. Deep ploughing is not required, and the wooden plough of Egypt does little more than scratch the soil, breaking the surface into rough clods, among which the seed is sown. These clods are seldom broken by harrowing, for if the surface were *too* smooth, the sun would "cake" the land after irrigation, and so smother the seed. There is an implement used, however, rather like a barrow without a wheel, which is dragged over the ploughed land, partially breaking the lumps and covering up the newly sown seed.


R. Talbot Kelly. R.B.A. 1904.

LATE LABOUR

The Life of the "Fellah"

The soil is wonderfully fertile, and the extent of its productiveness depends largely upon the regular and sufficient distribution of irrigating water, in which work much of the labour of the field is employed. The annual overflow of the Nile reaches a very small proportion of the whole land, which is therefore fed by a system of large canals which carry the fertilising fluid to every corner of the Delta. From these larger canals (which also form useful highways) branch lesser ones, intersecting the country in all directions, and from which each estate or farm draws its supply. This supply is regulated by Government, the canals being filled in rotation, and the farmer allowed so many shadoofs or sakkias according to his acreage; and, in the case of the steam-pump, the water raised is authorised up to a certain number of gallons per day or per week, and is measured by meter.

The fields are nearly always divided into little squares formed by a low ridge of mud; and the water being brought from the pumps by a shallow channel formed in the same way, all that is required is to break down the wall with a "fass" (or hoe), or even with the foot, and so allow the water to flood whichever portion of the field requires it. When sufficient has been given to one square, the channel is closed by a clod of earth and the water diverted into another part of the field.

Conditions in Egypt are favourable to crop-raising, and, given an adequate water-supply, success depends almost entirely upon the efforts of the farmer; and

there can be no doubt that much of the increased wealth of the people and country is due to the enormous development of irrigation-works which has been going on for some years past.

Every one, however, must work. While the father is busy ploughing or sowing, the sons work at the shadoof. The women, in the intervals of housework, are also busy in the fields, while children of the tenderest age watch the cattle tethered in the bercime or drive the patient buffalo at the water-wheel.

While the corn is growing, other work is to be done. The cotton-fields have to be weeded and vegetables planted. The first crop of bercime, enriched by the manure of the cattle grazing upon it, is replaced by a second heavier crop, which is cut and marketed as fodder.

Meanwhile the palm-trees want attention. Each tree must be separately climbed and pruned, the outer branches being cut off, leaving only the central bunch of leaves to protect the opening blossom. When ripe, each female flower must be fertilised by male pollen, for the farmer pays a tax on every fruiting tree and will take no chances.

Large areas are under date-cultivation, and although requiring considerable attention it is a very profitable crop. The tree begins to fruit at about three years old, often when mature bearing four to eight cwt. of fruit per tree. When cultivated, the date-palm is never of great height like the wild ones we meet at intervals, but so soon as its limit of profitable production

ESBET-EL-EKIAD—LAND OF GOSHEN

is reached it is cut down to save the tax and make room for a new one. The crop is almost entirely taken up by European dealers, and even a few weeks after harvest it is hardly possible to obtain a handful of dates in a village which perhaps is entirely occupied in their cultivation.

Here again economy is the rule. Every leaf cut off is dried, and later on made into baskets or the wicker beds of the middle classes, while under the trees, if the grove is not too dense, bercime and vegetables occupy the intervening spaces.

Then the corn harvest begins, in which female labour is largely employed, numbers of women and girls following the crop from village to village until all is gathered. These labourers are usually paid in grain, which can be readily exchanged for food or lodging or the other necessaries of the moment, leaving a margin in cash as the result of much hard bargaining with the local dealers.

The corn is generally plucked up by the roots, made up into little sheaves, and carried to some vacant spot in the vicinity to await its threshing. As soon as the crop is off the field, flocks of sheep or goats are put on to it to feed upon whatever stubble or gleanings may remain, and behind them comes the ploughman, preparing the ground for the next crop. These occupations are concurrent, and I have seen in the same field every operation from ploughing to threshing going on at the same moment, for no time must be lost if the land is to give its best return.

The harvest being gathered, threshing follows, a picturesque operation of peculiarly Biblical interest. The corn being spread in a large circular pile on some clear space of ground close to the village, a yoke of oxen are driven round and round upon it, drawing after them a wooden vehicle rather like a large chair on runners. This is called the "nurag," and is ingenious. Between the runners which assist the oxen in beating out the corn, are several circular knives, which revolve as the "nurag" travels, and simultaneously cut up the straw into the "tibbin," which is the staple fodder for stable animals. Though strictly adhering to the Scriptural command and leaving his yoke unmuzzled, the driver, seated in the "nurag," vigorously wields his whip of ox-hide, and gives them little opportunity for forage.

When the operation is over there remains a high mound of grain, chaff, and chopped straw which must be separated. The means employed are simple to a degree. Taking advantage of a breeze, a man with a large wooden shovel tosses the mixture high into the air. The corn, being heavy, falls in a gradually increasing pile close to the workman's feet, the chaff and straw blowing away and forming a second pile of "tibbin" some little distance off; each is then separately gathered and stored, and the operation is complete.

Though hard work is imperative, the increased water-supply resulting from barrage-works and canal-building enables the farmer to get the best return for his labour; and even reclaimed desert-land may, with

copious irrigation, be quickly brought under cultivation, and, in the course of three or four years, be productive of two or even three crops per annum. Everything depends upon his own industry, and with free water and proper application the fellah is able to live with some degree of comfort upon a holding of eight to ten feddans of land.

If any proof were wanting as to the prosperity and security of tenure now enjoyed by the fellahīn, it is to be found in their eagerness to buy land, and their ability to pay for it.

In the case of Government land (which is usually sold by auction on the spot), rather than add to estates already large, preference is given to smaller buyers, who, by a graduated system of payments, are enabled to pay off the purchase-money and yearly taxation by instalments : a system which, while encouraging thrift among the people, incidentally restores to circulation large sums of hoarded wealth.

One thing which must strike the observer is the entire absence of fences or other divisions between estates or farms. Certainly the canals do supply leading boundary marks, but otherwise the country is apparently one continuous field, where each farmer knows to a nicety the extent of his holding, which is roughly indicated by a stone or post here and there, landmarks which no one would commit the crime of removing. Should doubt or dispute arise upon these points, the matter is usually adjusted by the omdeh or sheykh of the village.

Here let me mention that though the title of sheykh is generally a birthright, it does not of necessity imply authority. Each village has its omdeh or sheykh appointed by the Government; sometimes the hereditary sheykh may fill the position, but often the appointment is specially made and the title only enjoyed so long as the holder is continued in the office. He is responsible for the good behaviour of his people as well as the collection of local taxes, and exercises a general control over the affairs of his village. The office carries with it a small remuneration, while the honour is greatly appreciated.

Speaking generally, the fellahīn live very amicably together, and, so far as my observation goes, quarrels are infrequent. Their relations would seem to be governed by a patriarchal feeling of kinship, and poetry exists amid their toil in the beautiful idioms of their language and salutations.

Strangers passing in the road salute each other graciously and gracefully, while friends in meeting exhaust a vocabulary of compliment before the direct question as to health or happiness is asked or answered. What could be more poetic than their "Good-bye," which says:

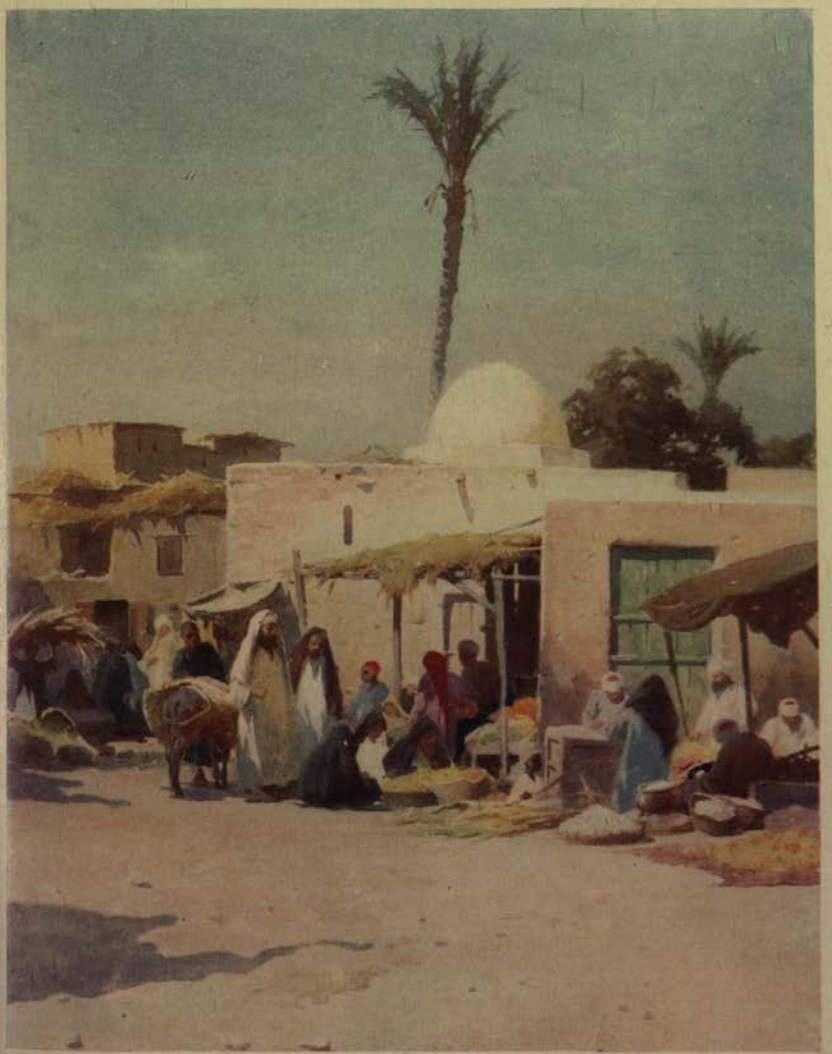
"Shūf wishuk b'il khare in-sh'llah" (Until by the will of God I see your face in health)?

Or the greeting between reunited friends:

"Ana huashtini ya akhuya" (I have longed for you, O my brother)?

The "salaam" itself is full of meaning. First the

A CORNER IN THE MARKET-PLACE



hand touches the forehead, in token of submission, then the mouth—the kiss of peace,—and lastly is laid upon the breast to testify to trustfulness and faith.

See two natives "shake hands": there is no clasp in it, simply the touching of one by the other, but then each kisses his own as symbol of regard.

You render thanks in appreciation for hospitality received; your host will answer, "Your presence brings a blessing on the house," or perhaps will gravely reply, "From this moment I begin to live!" Exaggerated, no doubt, but reflecting that gracious instinct which characterises their attitude to strangers or friends alike.

These little prettinesses undoubtedly give light and beauty to lives which are otherwise one long continuance of toil. Amusements are few, and, except for the occasional "muled" or religious festival, there is little relaxation. Where one exists, the village café is a rendezvous for friends to gossip and discuss the progress of their crops. Books do not appeal, as few can read or write, and the odd newspapers that perhaps penetrate to so remote a distance are read aloud by the village barber or scribe. In other respects the day is one of labour—profitable, no doubt, but severe.

Even the children appear to have no childhood. At the earliest ages they begin the working life before them. The little girls collect dung as fuel for the domestic hearth, or watch the cattle in the fields; the boys are herding goats or taking beasts to water: labour begins, as labour ends, the lives of the people, whose existence would be almost that of the beasts were it not for the

joy of domestic life and those little courtesies which grace their intercourse with others.

The fellah has a sense of humour, and thoroughly enjoys a laugh. Does your donkey bray? that, it is explained, is because the Devil has whispered in its ear, "Your mother is dead!" The proverb, "Shami shumi masri harami" (The Syrian is a scoundrel, the Egyptian only a thief), reveals a vein of sarcasm which at the same time bears testimony to the superior business acumen of the "Shami"! Little love indeed is lost between the Syrian squatters in Egypt and their neighbours, whose attitude is summed up in the saying: "Iza kan t'shūf tarban wa Shami, sayeb et tarban wa mūt esh Shami" (Should you happen to see a Syrian or a snake, leave the snake alone but kill the Syrian)!

On the other hand, the robust physique and loud voices of the Egyptians seem to cow the few Turkish peasants who are engaged in farming in the Delta; and I am afraid that, if the truth were known, these poor fellows are often the victims of robbery and wrong at the hands of their neighbours.

These Turks, by the way, are most engaging in their simplicity and patience, and I know of no peasant class with whom I have so immediately felt on sympathetic terms. Their clean-cut features and sensitive mouths plainly indicate the reserved and refined natures they possess; and I have always noticed that no matter how poor—often desperately poor—the man may be, his house is tidy, the bedding irreproachably clean, and, when refreshment is offered, the whole

service of the table is elegant, and the utensils often choice.

Throughout its history Egypt has been noted as one of the world's granaries, and until the beginning of the last century had little but food-stuffs to export.

By threats of fine and punishment, however, Mohammed Ali compelled the people to plant trees and grow cotton. To-day, cotton is one of its most remunerative crops, and commands the highest price of any in the market. Of late years other growths have enormously developed. Onions, once grown solely as a vegetable for home use, are now exported in ever-increasing quantities. Sugar also, until recently planted only for local consumption, is now a crop of such dimensions as to employ a large amount of capital in its manufacture, and soon to result in another valuable addition to the export trade of Egypt.

The prejudice against trees, however, seems to have continued; for though the country is apparently well wooded, few of the trees are of any economic value. The date- and dôm-palms have their fruit, and the leaves of the former are, as I have said, utilised in basket-making, etc. The trunk, however, is useless as timber, and cannot be dressed. The sycamore and lebbek also are soft and non-enduring, and only the tamarisk yields a wood of any soundness, but that only in quantity sufficient for the making of their water-wheels and farm implements. There is no straight timber suitable for building or cabinet purposes grown in the country: all has to be imported; and

tourists who buy souvenirs in Cairo will often find that the case in which they are packed costs as much as the articles themselves!

That Egypt was not always treeless is shown by the ancient forestry records, and reference to timber growing for the building of its fleets. It is therefore particularly interesting to note the experiment in the cultivation of timber-trees now being carried on by the Ministry of Finance under the direction of Mr. Birdwood. The site selected for the nursery is at Tel-el-Kebir, in itself a fact of some importance as proving the feasibility of making virgin desert profitable; and though only in its infancy, many hundreds of thousands of timber- and fruit-trees have been successfully planted or sown there, and what a few years ago was simply a waste of pebble and sand is now a luxuriant garden.

I am not able to give any detailed list of the trees and shrubs which have been planted, but among them are a great variety of pines, eucalyptus, caoutchouc, etc., as well as pomegranates, oranges, and plums. With few exceptions, the trees have done well; some already are twenty feet or so in height, and many young beds have been successfully raised from seed. That the trees will *grow* is established; and if it can be shown that, as they develop, their economic properties are maintained, a new and valuable asset will be added to the resources of Egypt.

The experiment is, I think, of the greatest value, and the possibility of the country being eventually able

AT THE WELL

to supply its own hardwood and building timber is one to be anticipated with lively satisfaction.

Incidentally this experiment has had the effect of bringing under cultivation a bit of desert hitherto regarded as beyond its reach, and has given a high market value to neighbouring land previously considered worthless.

I have spoken a good deal of the fertility of the land and the effect of water on the sand, and of late years extended irrigation has brought under cultivation a very large acreage of desert formerly barren.

There is, however, another zone, fortunately a small one, where infiltration from the arable land on the one side, and the drainage from the desert on the other, each heavily charged with rotten salts, have poisoned the soil and made of it a picture of desolation. Here little grows but giant bulrushes or an occasional thorn. Fish are unknown in the brackish water, and wild birds shun its waste. In the light of day a skeleton, and at night shrouded in a silence which even the bull-frog fails to break.

I once rode through this district under a hot June sun, and its weirdness fascinated me. The rushes towering overhead, bleached and salt-encrusted, glittered in the sunshine, while their brittle leaves and stems seemed to shudder in the breeze.

No sound of life was to be heard, except the struggling of our tired horses through the tangled mass; while the splashing water, crystallising into salt

as it fell, blistered hands and face and parched us all with thirst.

A little farther on, the hot sun had evaporated the water, leaving a sediment of slime covered with a crust of salt. As you broke the surface in travelling, the black mud gave off most horrible odours, and at the same time liberated swarms of small stinging flies which made life unbearable; or again, pools of water formed incubators for the myriads of mosquitoes which novered over them. Nothing whatever in the shape of cultivation or animal life breaks the sadness of this dead land.

Away to the north is the once fruitful "Field of Zoan," overlooking which the ruins of Tanis remain to prove a former period of greatness. Here also bad water coming from higher lands has killed the once fertile plain. It is *dead*, and not even weeds will grow upon its sun-cracked soil. Here can still be seen the terraces and water-channels, and the little runnels in the gardens, and all the evidences of a former cultivation which Abraham once looked upon. I have seen nothing in ruined city or temple which speaks half so pathetically of its past as this sun-parched "mummy" land.

In between these barren lands are small patches of cultivation, where a few poor people strive to keep alive; and in one of these settlements, while riding to join my Bedawīn friends, I made the worst meal I ever had in Egypt: all that could be provided was a small bit of bread and a few ounces of sour milk between

three of us. Truly, in spite of its prosperity, there are some in the country so pitiably environed as to give point to the motto I once saw painted here :

"Ya moufeta el abouab
Ifta linna khare el bab"
(O Keykeeper [God], Guardian of the doors,
Open to us the prosperity of the door);

or in other words,

O God, give us a chance !

CHAPTER XII

THE DESERT AND THE BEDAWĪN

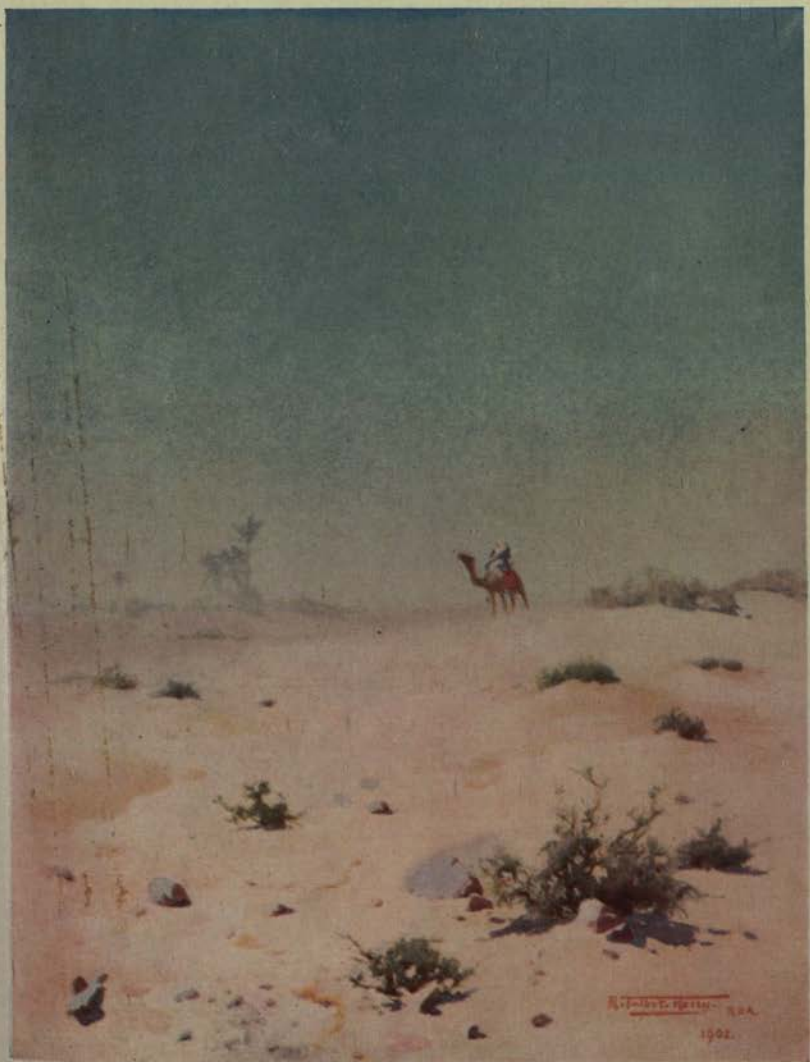
THE suddenness with which the cultivation of the Delta ceases and the surrounding deserts begin is one of the most striking of Egypt's many dramatic contrasts. Occasionally, as I have described in the preceding chapter, a marshy zone separates the two, but more generally the transition is abrupt and immediate.

Leaving the picturesque fellah and his richly pastoral surroundings, a few steps often are sufficient to introduce the wanderer into what is practically a new existence.

Not only is the scenery entirely changed, but its life also, human or animal, has little in common with that of the black soil, and presents features which, though of equal interest, are essentially different.

What is there about the desert which so irresistibly attracts those who have lived upon it? I am often asked the question, but find it hard to give a ready answer. There is a sense of freedom born of its own immensity, and the majesty of its awful stillness, which is strangely impressive, while its variety of colour and character effectually robs it of any charge of monotony.

"IN A BARREN AND DRY LAND, WHERE NO WATER IS"



Nowhere is sunshine more brilliant, or the air purer and more invigorating, while a thousand *little* things go to make up the total of its charm.

The moment the desert is struck a strange feeling of exhilaration comes over horse and rider, and in the crisp morning air both seem to experience the joy of life and become impatient for a race.

Holding in your horses for a moment, you give them their heads, and with a bound they are off at that tearing, plunging gallop peculiar to the desert-bred stallion. The wind rushes by you, tossing mane and tassels, as with snorts of fierce enjoyment the horse inhales the breeze. Sand and pebbles fly from their hoof-strokes, while the clumps of grey-green "mit minan" bush or spiky "helga" are quickly left behind. As you race along, the startled jerboa and desert hare scatter to right and left before you, and the pelican or vulture seek safety in rapid flight. Jackals crouch in their lairs as you pass, and presently up start a pair of black wolf and give object to the chase, and the pace grows hotter till the hard-pressed animals reach sanctuary in the rocks. It is a half-hour of intoxication for man and beast, until, panting but excited, your horses are with difficulty brought to a standstill.

These "Arabs" get up a wonderful pace, and the sensation is delightful. Their stoppage, however, is abrupt, and should the rider be careless he and his steed will part company!

Dismounting to rest a while, you have time to notice more particularly the desert growths which surround

you. The most common is the "mit minan," a sage-like shrub, but often growing to a height of six or seven feet, and in clumps of as much as forty feet in circumference. Then there is the fork-like "helba" and desert thorn, the bright green "hyssop," or the highly aromatic "gazelle broth," and a great variety of ice-plants, some red and fleshy, others lusciously green. Wild-flowers also abound, and I have counted as many as twenty varieties in an area of as many feet. One of the prettiest is the flower of the "helga," heliotrope in colour, and shaped like a convolvulus, which springs from the junction of spine and stem, and among them grows the dingy "atriplex" or salt-bush, small and rather like a sponge in appearance.

Remain still and look closer, and another interest appears in the *life* these shrubs harbour. Little flies feeding on the young shoots are being hunted by the spider or ant, who again fall victims to the stealthy lizard, the smaller varieties of which would seem to be devoured by their larger brothers, some of whom are of considerable size and exceedingly quick in their motion. Large beetles scavenge the desert, and with herculean efforts carry away and bury in the sand pieces of offal and partially consumed prey many times larger than themselves. Their *modus operandi* is very interesting. The "booty" is deposited, and the beetle commences to excavate below it, shovelling the loose sand away with head and shoulders. Gradually the mass of forage sinks, until it is entirely below the surface, and

MIRAGIC HEAT

the sand, falling in upon it, covers it. Then a more remarkable feat is performed; for in sand too loose to retain a footprint the "scarab" succeeds in forming a tunnel from the open air to his hidden treasure below. How it is done is a mystery, for no artificial aid is employed, and simply with head and shoulders as before, the passage is cleared, and the sand above remains to crown the arch.

Butterflies and other gaily-winged insects furnish food for lark or starling, who in turn provide a dinner for the hawk.

The surface sand is largely strewn with coloured pebbles, among which are agate, onyx, cornelian, and flint, while fossil shell-fish or other petrifactions prove it once an ocean-bed. More recent floods have brought their contribution of porphyry or gritstone; volcanic clinker and conglomerate adding still another to the many pages of its history.

Such in part is the physical desert, which for the geologist, botanist, or student of its fauna has many fascinations. But to the *artist* what?—A limitless expanse of variegated sand, alternately flat or undulating, which stretches, in subtle modifications of its tints, to distances hardly to be determined; the little flecks of cloud, and the low hills, rosy or delicately purple in the sun-swathed air, which from time to time peep above the horizon, only serve to lead the imagination to the immensity of its waste beyond.

Out-jutting rock or lying boulder, ruddy and sun-burnt, cast their blue shadows on the sand, whose

colour gains in delicacy by contrast with the greens and greys of its vegetable growth.

There is an opalescent sparkle and clear transparency of light about it all which is most subtly beautiful, a poetic setting for the romantic life of the Bedawīn who inhabit it.

My first introduction to the Bedawīn was accidental, but fortunately under pleasant conditions, which led to my being invited by a sheykh to pay a visit to his camp; and I soon afterwards found myself the guest of the Sheykh Alewa and Saoud-el-Tahawi, chiefs of the Hanaardi Arabs, then camped in the desert of Suez.

Under the escort of a party of horsemen of the tribe, camp was reached at sunset, and a final mad gallop brought us to the Sheykh's tent, where he and his sons were awaiting us. Assisting us to dismount, and kissing my hand, the Sheykh bade me welcome, and, conducting me to my tent, added, "This house is yours; do what you will with it, and with us your servants." A Biblical greeting, the effect of which was heightened as water was brought, and face, hands, and feet washed before I was left to rest upon the cushions in the tent, or the Sheykh retired to superintend the preparation of the evening meal.

As I rested, one by one the headmen of the tribe called to pay their respects. Taking off their shoes at the entrance, they advanced in turns with many "salaams," each as he kissed my hand uttering the single word "Mahubbah" (Welcome); then, seating themselves in a long row on the opposite side of the

tent, discussed me in undertones. No one spoke to me unaddressed, and even the Sheykh himself would not sit upon the carpet beside me uninvited.

The meal was much as others I have described, though the bread was more palatable, and among other dishes new to me was "cumis" (or curdled mares'-milk), and a rather sour and granular cheese made from camels'-milk. The etiquette of the table was the same; and here also, after making a light meal, the Sheykh rose so that his sons, who up to now had served us, might enjoy the honour of "breaking bread" with the guest. At this first meal salt was offered and eaten by all present, though it did not appear at subsequent meals—a distinct privation to a European.

As night fell a large fire of corn-cobs and scrub would be lit in the tent, and all would gather round it to enjoy the grateful heat; for, after a shade temperature of perhaps 95° or 100° at mid-day, the nightly fall to a little above freezing-point is trying, and the nights often are bitterly cold.

The question naturally arises, How do these Arabs occupy themselves? Shepherds and nomads for generations, their attention is directed principally to the tending of their large flocks of sheep and goats, and the breeding of camels and horses. Robbery, with which their name is often associated, is usually more or less incidental, and not a habit, and from their point of view is to some extent justifiable. I noticed on one occasion a sheykh's son wearing a lady's green silk dressing-gown, and on my asking him where he got it, he rather

ambiguously replied: "Well, you see, Allah has given those dirty Egyptians all that fat land, where they can see their food growing before them, while *our* inheritance is this desert!" then, meaningly, "We take toll of the desert!"

Nomads from necessity rather than choice, the Arabs' movements depend upon the supply of water and fodder obtainable, and while on the march they use small tents, easily pitched or stored away. When the supply of these essentials is ample, permanent camps are formed, where tents of very large size are pitched, and are usually surrounded by a compound hedged with "doura" stalks, while frequently a "lodge" of stone or mud is erected as a guest-house.

This Hanaardi camp being typical of the permanent home, let me describe it fully.

The tents are of regal proportions, often covering 2000 square feet, and are about 11 feet in height in the centre, sloping to some 5 feet or so at the sides. The tent-cloth is made of goat-hair, and is woven in broad stripes of black, green, maroon, and white, and stitched together. From the seams hang long tassels, from which other cloths are suspended so as to divide the whole into compartments when required.

Round the side walls are many painted boxes containing clothing or utensils, the rugs and blankets used for bedding, camel and horse saddles, and all the various impedimenta of the chase or home, in which latter is usually included a handloom for the weaving of the tent-cloths. Rugs are spread upon the sand, and

A DESERT COURIER

cushions scattered about them for reclining. In the corner is a "zeer" or large water-pot, and beside it a "cubiyeh" or drinking-cup of brass or copper. In the sand is half buried a large earthen bowl, used as a hearth, while perhaps a few quaintly wrought lamps complete the list of furniture.

The Bedawīn themselves are striking in appearance, tall, and commanding in their carriage, and having the keen eye and aquiline nose of the Semite. Frequently handsome, there is an air of manly strength about them born of traditions and habits of freedom. Serious in manner, they have none of that noisiness which characterises the Egyptians. Dignity and reserve are virtues in their eyes, as I judge from the remark one sheykh made to another on the occasion of my first visit: "I like this man, he does not make a noise or laugh!"

Domestic in their habits, everything about them has personal associations. The tent-cloths are spun, woven, and dyed by their women and children, as also are their saddle-cloths and trappings, and are in consequence so much prized that no money will buy the simplest product of their wives' industry, though frequently they may be *given* as a token of regard. Generally married to one wife, she is helpmeet and companion to her lord, and with her children is treated with devotion and respect; and I believe that the Arab word "watan" is the only equivalent in any language for the English word "home."

Another trait in the Arab character which dis-

tinguishes him from his Egyptian neighbour is his love for dumb animals. While the Egyptian is instinctively cruel to beasts, the Bedawi loves his horse or camel, and makes pets of his dogs. In their tents are always a few of these desert greyhounds, and very frequently a couple of tame gazelles; while among the Arabs of the Libyan desert the "cheetah" or hunting leopard is trained for sport and is frequently a domestic pet.

The daily life of the Bedawīn is quaintly pictorial and vividly suggestive of Bible days.

Here is a shepherd leading his piebald flock in search of pasturage or water, and, with his long gun ready, keeping a watchful guard against the sudden onslaught of a wolf; or, as he walks he deftly spins yarn from the wool torn from the fleeces of his charge by desert thorn or scrub. Again, a party of Arabs are exercising their horses or driving camels to the nearest well.

Round about the tents domestic incident is in full swing. Here is Hagar, black-eyed and handsome, playing with her firstborn son, who with childish hands spreads "doura" for the fowl and pigeons which flutter round them; close beside them, sleepy-eyed but vigilant, a rough-coated dog affectionately mounts guard upon the pair. Black-robed women are working at the looms, or are engaged in plaiting tassels for their lords' "hagīn."[1]

Others again grind flour at the hand-mill, or turn the

[1] The hagīn or dromedary is the *racing* camel, specially bred for the purpose by the Bedawīn. A common error supposes two humps in the case of the dromedary as against the camel's one. All are camels, the two-humped species being the Bactrian camel of the Asiatic steppes.

iron drum in which they roast the coffee-berries on a fire of "cobs"; and children, brightly dressed, play "peep-bo" round the tents!

Such are some of the pictures close to hand. Mount your horse or camel and follow the men and you will find more stirring ones. Here is a bunch of colts which must be broken in. Beautiful in their action and innocent of restraint, at first they playfully resist all efforts to coax the bridle over their heads. Finally, one is saddled and bridled, and the pretty beast begins to realise that a period in his life is past, and now begins a struggle for supremacy with man. Taking advantage of its momentary surprise, the Arab quickly mounts and gathers up the reins. For an instant it is absolutely still with pent-up indignation; then, with a sudden bound which sometimes bursts the girths and leaves the rider in the dust, the horse breaks into a terrific gallop, in which it fights and plunges in a vain endeavour to get rid of its unaccustomed load. As suddenly as it began, it will put its two front feet together and stop dead; then, should this not be sufficient, will perhaps begin to rear, or jump quickly from side to side. Every trick is tried, but all of no avail; and finally it breaks into a long flying stride as though to run for ever across the scudding sand, and so to leave behind it the horrid nightmare which has so suddenly come upon it.

An hour or two later, an exhausted man, whose bloodshot eyes and drawn face testify to the severity of the fight, rides slowly into camp on a dejected horse,

panting and quivering, and now hardly to be coaxed into an amble by the encouraging endearments those parched lips can scarcely utter. The man has won, but it will be many days before he will be able to enjoy that first ride when he and his now docile friend will think and move as one.

Horsemanship is one of the cardinal virtues with the Bedawīn, who will refer to their neighbours as "those dirty Egyptians who cannot ride a horse," and much of your prestige among them depends upon your ability to ride their desert-bred beauties. It is curious that, no matter how well-behaved and gentle a horse may be with his master, he nearly always rebels against a strange rider, who will have to reconquer the beast for himself.

The Arabs are universally good horsemen, and keenly enjoy equestrian sports. One pretty trick they do, is to mark out a course by placing water-pots on either side alternately, and some little distance apart. Then, urging his horse into a furious gallop, the rider will hang from the saddle and pick up a "ghouleh" from one side, and then, swinging over, place it on the ground on the other, while at the same time picking up another. This is repeated over and over again with wonderful precision and rapidity, and seldom at the expense of a cracked pot.

Another trick, rather disconcerting to the stranger, is to charge straight at you as you stand, stopping suddenly just in front of you with the horse's nose almost touching yours, or else with a quick swerve avoid

A DUEL

the seemingly inevitable collision. Etiquette forbids any movement on your part, as this would imply suspicion of the rider's skill.

By far the most exciting, however, of these sports is "jerīd" or javelin play. This usually occurs when two friendly tribes meet upon a suitable stretch of desert, each tribe being represented by several hundred horsemen, which are drawn up in lines facing each other a quarter of a mile or more apart.

The champion of one side will then ride up to the opposed line, and, with scorn and ridicule of them and a boastful narration of his own exploits, challenge one of them to fight.

On the appearance of the opposing champion the first must turn and fly, chased by the other, his endeavour being to reach his own lines before being caught by his pursuer. Should he succeed in doing so, both turn, and the positions of pursuer and fugitive are reversed, but it always ends in a fierce, though friendly, fight in the centre, where each, by heavy javelin-strokes, strives to unseat the other. One, or even both, may be placed *hors de combat*, often with the addition of a broken head or fractured limb.

Various "champions" appear and disappear, until the pent-up excitement of the onlookers will stand the strain no longer, and, each side shouting their family battle-cry, the opposed lines of horsemen will charge each other and engage in a desperate *mêlée* in the middle. The horses as well as their riders are equally madly excited, and the scrimmage often results in

the serious injury, or even death, of several of the combatants.

No ill-feeling seems to be engendered, however; though nearly approaching *war*, it is simply a friendly exhibition of prowess, in which fatalities are complacently regarded as "the will of God."

Such are some of the subjects the desert affords the artist, in which the simple incidents of patriarchal life are varied by a "fantasia" on horse- or camel-back, or the mediæval excitement of a hawking-party.

Painting in the desert, however, is very arduous. It is a "barren and dry land," where the heat often is terrible, and where hunger and thirst add their discomfort to the many difficulties incidental to your work: the glare of light thrown upwards from the glittering sand, the irritation of the sand-flies, and above all the feeling of hopelessness of ever approximating to the subtle beauty of your subject. Thirst, however, may often be relieved by sucking a pebble, while, as I have mentioned before, the expedient of a little charcoal or green paint rubbed upon the eyelids (especially the *lower* one) is a considerable mitigation of the glare.

There is one phase of desert-life, however, which is not only intensely disagreeable, but frequently attended with danger, and that is the sandstorm. Most people who have visited Egypt have in Cairo, or up the Nile, had some experience of the discomforts of the khamsīn; but this can give them little or no idea of what it means to the traveller in the desert, where no shelter is obtainable, and the full effect of the storm is felt.

At first the air is still, but hot and lifeless, while the sky gradually assumes a dusty appearance, as, low down on the horizon, ominous-looking clouds appear in the south-west. The sultry air becomes more and more stifling, producing a feeling of lassitude and depression which is distressing; camels and horses also show signs of uneasiness, and the sheep bleat pitifully in apprehension.

Presently little puffs of wind, hot as from an oven, herald the approaching storm. As the wind gains in strength, the air is filled with a dusty fog through which the sickly glare of the sun is hardly visible. Fine drift-sand blows like snow-wreaths across the desert, and the eyes are blinded and the lungs filled with the choking dust. As the storm develops, little splinters of rock or small pebbles are hurled through the air, and cut the skin like knives. The sun is totally obscured, and the ever-driving sand gradually assumes the appearance of billows, which, splashing and breaking upon the rocks like ocean surf, envelops everything in camp, and piles tons of drift-sand high against the tents and baggage. Then comes the time when safety lies in movement. Camp equipage is hastily packed upon the terror-stricken animals, and the party starts to ride obliquely through the storm, in order to cross its path, or find shelter in a mountain spur. To remain still is to be covered and entombed, while riding is discomfort indescribable.

The silk "cufia"[1] is wrapped closely round your

[1] A coloured scarf used as a head-dress, which is wrapped round the tarbūsh.

head, covering mouth and nose, and leaving only the eyes exposed, which, though protecting the face from the flying splinters, only adds to your heat and suffocation. Even should the water-skins not be cracked or the water dried up, you cannot stop to drink, and food is equally unattainable. "Hungry and thirsty, your soul dies within you," as hour after hour you ride until the storm abates or some shelter is found to end your misery.

Fortunately, all sand-storms are not so violent as this, and at the expense of severe granulation of the eyes I have been able to paint them in many moods, and in my opinion the pictures I have been able to obtain have amply repaid my suffering.

Sometimes the *moral* effect of such storms is peculiar, and results in a kind of temporary hallucination which is curious. I was caught in a storm some time ago which had this curious effect upon both my horse and myself. We were riding over a rough bit of desert, slightly undulating, with "khores," or water-worn gullies, here and there. During a dense whirl of sand, our party lost touch with each other and I found myself alone. In all directions was this driving dust-veil, which had the effect of distorting everything. Rocks became mountains and a shrub appeared as a tree. All idea of distance was lost, and, standing upon the little hummock from which I searched for the rest of my party, I might have been outside the universe witnessing the warring of the elements in original chaos.

A SANDSTORM

My horse was terrified or stupid and refused to move, so, dismounting, I attempted to lead him by the head. Still he would not go, and I decided to remount. In doing so, I vaulted right over him, and fell upon the off side, so distorted was my sense of proportion. When I eventually found the rest of the party, they appeared to be miles away, though the size of giants, and the illusion only ceased upon my coming close alongside them. I have been in many desert storms, but this was the only occasion upon which such a sequence of strange phenomena and delusions occurred, probably due to extreme fatigue.

In contrast to such experiences, how peaceful are the nights in the desert! The air is cold and clear, and the stars appear unusually large and close upon you, while the silence is as though Nature held her breath!

The social relationships of the Bedawīn are simple. Each tribe is governed by its sheykh, the "father" of the family, whose expressed wish is sufficient to ensure the carrying out of any plan, or to prohibit any action of which he disapproves; and it is very charming to see the deference and respect with which the "patriarch" is regarded by his sons and tribesmen.

Their etiquette also should be scrupulously respected by the stranger if he would avoid friction. I have known of cases where some ignorant omission, or commission, on the part of a guest could only be taken as an insulting disregard of their feelings and traditions. No one, for instance, should refuse the "tit-bit" offered by his host at meals, nor should he approach a tent

without first announcing himself from a distance, in order that time may be given for the women to retire ere the stranger appears. To inquire as to the welfare of wife or daughter is the worst of bad manners, even if not taken as an insult; nor should you express admiration or praise of anything living, without adding the invocation "Ma'sha'llah!" (May God preserve it from ill!), and thus avert the disastrous results of the "evil eye."

Similarly, your tent is sacred, and no one will enter uninvited, unless as your servant in the performance of some necessary office, though all will eagerly respond to your invitation to "t'fudd'l" round the hearth at night, and talk or ruminate as your mood may be. What a picture it is, as one by one your dusky friends enter ghostlike through the smoke, and, "salaaming," seat themselves round the fire! Their swarthy features and ample robes are boldly relieved by the gloom beyond, against which their head-dress of brightly coloured "cufia" and gold-banded "akal"[1] gleam brilliant in the flickering light. Very interesting sometimes are the conversations which ensue, or the tales of adventure and romantic traditions of the tribe which they delight to narrate.

Practically devoid of education, books are few, and the history of their race is preserved by oral transmission from generation to generation, usually in the form of poetry or song.

[1] A band of plaited goat-hair, often bound with gold "bosses," used to secure the cufia to the tarbūsh.

STORM-DRIVEN

While a guest of the Sheykh Mansour Abn Nasr-ullah, chief of the Nefaarta Arabs, I had an opportunity of hearing one of these songs, which merits some description. We were seated in the Sheykh's tent, all the headmen of the tribe being present to enjoy this narration of the prowess of their ancestors.

The bard was an old man, grey-bearded and withered, and was accompanied by his son, who would succeed him. Each carried a two-stringed instrument which is played with a bow, called the "kemengeh"; and having by many preliminaries worked his audience up to the proper pitch of excited anticipation, the bard began the "Song of the Nefaarta."

Introduced by a weird accompaniment on the "kemengeh," to which the boy played a kind of second, it commenced like the sighing of the wind in the trees, or the sound of its sweep across the desert when the sand blows gently through the thorns. Gathering volume by degrees, and with an infinite variation of its opening theme, a gradual *crescendo* led up to the commencement of the song itself.

Going back for generations, the legend described the growing of the parent tribe into a power in Mesopotamia; how later, when camels and horses and doughty warriors were numerous, they decided upon the conquest of Tunis. Every varying mood was emphasised by the accompaniment, and one seemed to hear the hurried riding of messengers sent to summon distant families, till the sound of their horses' hoof-strokes was lost in the desert wind.

Presently, from the distance, came the sound of gathering hordes, the thunder of whose approach culminated in their wild salutation of the sheykh under whose banner they were gathered.

Then were described the incidents of the long months of the desert journey. Heat, thirst, hunger, and dust by day, and the eternal silence of the starlight, broken only by the distant howl of wolf or jackal; the waxing and waning of the moons, or the excitements and forays of the march,—each in turn, by voice and accompaniment, were graphically represented. Hour after hour this went on, until, after four hours of close attention, fatigue prevented my listening to its conclusion, and at midnight I retired. A wonderful epic, admirably rendered, and occupying in all about eight hours in its performance, it formed a splendid theme for dramatist or composer.

This position of tribal poet is hereditary. Each member of the tribe contributes to the bard's support, and his sons are taught from infancy to perpetuate their songs and legends.

Though their nomadic life militates against education, the Bedawīn are very much alive to its advantages, and quickly glean scraps of knowledge from those they meet with in their wanderings. I have been struck with the intelligence with which they grasp the salient point of any matter under discussion, and their interest in countries and conditions of life quite foreign to them.

Moslems of a good type, they practise what is good

WHIRLWIND IN THE DESERT

in their religion, and would seem to avail themselves but little of its licence. Manly and courageous, and possessed of many virtues, their hospitality is great and their friendship to be valued. Scornful of any who accept "backsheesh," and abhorrent of a lie, their lives are upright according to their lights; while their dignity and courtesy impresses with a sense of nobility and strength. Worthy foes, but better friends, they are of the number of Nature's gentlemen, and he may well be gratified of whom they say, "He is 'Sahabe makbūl.'"[1]

[1] "Sahabe makbūl" means an "accepted friend," the word "makbūl" being applied to coin of the realm, or any deed or document which bears the hall-mark of official guarantee.

CHAPTER XIII

RELIGION AND CHARACTER OF THE EGYPTIANS

It is very difficult for a European to form any just estimate of the character of an Oriental, who is usually enveloped in a reserve difficult to penetrate; nor is it easy for the Western mind to fully appreciate the ideas or motives which dominate the action of the Moslem.

In attempting any analysis of their national character, history and environment must be taken into consideration, and this is especially the case with the Egyptians. Leaving out of the question the partly Europeanised and hybrid population of Cairo, we will again take the fellahīn as the representative class, and who I believe I am correct in saying are the direct descendants of the ancient Egyptians. In type and feature they closely resemble the sculptured figures of the monuments, and, in spite of the periodic admixture of foreign elements, the Egyptian has out-lasted and absorbed them all, and remains to-day practically the same race as three thousand years ago.

All through this long period of history their society has been divided into two broad classes: the highborn

rulers and priesthood, and the slaves, whose agricultural pursuits were only varied by occasional military service or labour upon public works.

One by one, succeeding dynasties have succumbed to more vigorous and powerful successors. The Pharaohnic successions and the Persian, Greek, or Roman conquerors have gone, each in turn destroying the aristocracy which preceded it, and of whom no trace now remains but in the temples or monuments of their day. But through all the political vicissitudes of the country, and frequent change of masters, the slave class has continued till to-day in the persons of the fellahīn. Little altered in character, following the same avocations, using the same implements, and above all rendering the same servile obedience to the dominant power as was the case in the days of Rameses or Seti. Docile and obedient, good-humoured and industrious, they are, and always have been, a nation of slaves. Passive in affliction and rendering a ready obedience to the stronger will which rules them, they are entirely devoid of that spirit of manly independence so characteristic of their Bedawīn neighbours, and lacking in the initiative of the newer Western races.

Since the Mohammedan conquest in the year 638 A.D., this passivity of character has been still further accentuated by the fatalistic teaching of their religion.

In the year 1517 Egypt came under the domination of the Turks, and, with the brief interruption of Napoleon's occupation (1798-1801), has continued under their government until the present time.

Egypt

The era of the modern Egyptians may be considered to date from the accession of Mohammed Ali in 1811, during whose reign so many public works were inaugurated, but again at the cost of forced labour and excessive taxation of the poor "fellah."

Never characterised by strong action, and by long tradition trained to submission, the people suffered in patience the cruelty, extortion, and frightful injustice of the pashalik system of government; until, with the expulsion of Ismail and the advent of Tewfik Pasha and the Dual Control, there began that new era whose impartial justice and wise administration of the country have for the first time in his history emancipated the "fellah" and inspired in him a *hope!*

With such a history, it is little wonder that the Egyptian has many traits which are to be condemned. Oppression has developed in him a propensity to lying and deceit, and, childlike, he seeks to make up for insignificance by *noise;* and, as is always the case among a persecuted race, vengeance for the cruelty they themselves suffer is wreaked upon the weaker, or on beasts. Much as I like the "native," his cruelty to animals is terrible at times; and one of the very few occasions on which I have got into trouble in Cairo, was when I interfered to put a stop to a child's amusing itself by plucking the feathers from a struggling pigeon, held by her father for the purpose!

On the other hand, they are industrious, simple in their habits, and devoted to their children; and, as I have shown, hospitable to the stranger. Courteous to

PRAYER

each other, and keenly appreciative of a joke, they have many traits which charm, whereas their faults may usually be traced to the influence of their origin and past government. Quarrelling seldom, and kind to their poorer or afflicted brothers, I confess to a very warm feeling for these poor simple people, who respond so readily to a kindly word or act, and are so grateful for consideration.

One thing which always impresses me strongly is the evident sincerity of their religion. To them "Allah" is a *personal* Deity, whose fatherhood is believed in, and to whom his children can with confidence appeal. Whatever *is*, is ordained of Allah, and therefore best, and no word of complaint questions the Divine intelligence or regard for welfare of the "faithful." "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," is their attitude, and "Kismet"[1] the only comment on disaster!

It is a custom among many to regard the Mohammedan religion as largely vicious and immoral. In reality it is neither, and I am strongly of opinion that a sincere Moslem is a *good* man, and that his religion is in many ways spiritual and ennobling. Indeed, an average Mohammedan may well shame the majority of Christians. To him, his religion is a daily personal need, and his devotions, in which he constantly occupies himself, are tremendously real. The ritual of prayer provides few petitions and is mostly a religion of adoration, though petitions are presented

[1] Fate.

to the Almighty with absolute trust in his all-merciful fatherhood.

Though religious, the Egyptians are broad-minded and practical, and do not allow its claims to interfere with other duties. Some time ago, while in Cairo, it suddenly occurred to me that by working all Friday and requiring the attendance of my servant I was debarring him from attending the "duhr" or mid-day prayer. I told him to run off and attend his mosque, but he replied: "My duty now is to my master; my God knows that I will pray when I am at leisure, but I must do my work first."

Similarly, their respect for food as the direct preserver of life justifies their conclusion of a meal even though the hour of prayer has arrived. Personal cleanliness is a first necessity to the devout, no Mohammedan presuming to pray unwashed: a very wholesome and rational provision for a hot country, and this law applies also to clothing, carpets, and whatever else is used during devotions.

It is somewhat curious that while to the men religious duties are so all-important, the same obligation does not rest upon the women. It almost seems as though they were supposed to have no souls; they are *forbidden* even to enter the mosques during the hours of prayer, and, though they may pray in their own homes, and may enter the mosques at other times, religious duties are seldom performed by them, and indeed are hardly expected.

No doubt Mohammedanism permits customs which

are not tolerated in Christian countries. Polygamy, for instance, is sanctioned by the Korān ; but it must be remembered that this is only the continuance of a practice common among the patriarchs and heroes of the Old Testament. As a rule, the Egyptian is the husband of one wife, and, provided she has children, and gives no serious cause for displeasure, he is usually faithful to her. Should she, however, be barren, the husband will probably take a second in the hope of perpetuating his name and race ; and the first wife, if not previously divorced, becomes an attendant upon her more fortunate sister.

Their religion exercises a great influence upon the mass of the people, among whom it is a frequent subject of discussion ; and, just as Arabi Pasha's success initially was the result of his intimate knowledge of the Korān and his power of dramatic recitation of its verses, so Moslem history shows how, in almost all cases, pretenders and leaders of great popular movements have gained their ascendency through its influence.

Owing to lack of education and very slight intercommunication between villages, public opinion in Egypt is almost non-existent, and it is only by appeals to their religious fervour or fanaticism that any combined action on their part can be aroused.

Most of the festivals, which form the only relaxation from work, are of a religious character, and even the names men bear have often a similar significance. Thus :—

Abdul Aziz	means	The Slave or Servant of the Beneficent One.
Abd-el-Rahman	„	The Servant of the Most Compassionate.
Abdullah	„	The Servant of God.
Nasrullah	„	The Victory of God.
Habibullah	„	The Beloved of God.
Nur-ed-Din	„	The Light (or Glory) of Religion.
Abd-el-Messieh	„	The Servant of Christ.

And so on.

This last name is suggestive, and it seems difficult to reconcile their fanatical hatred of the Christian with the fact that such a name as this is honoured among them, and that the "Eed-el-Imam," or "birthday of Christ," is one of their great festivals.

Many of these "muleds," or sacred feasts, are most interesting to the observer, in the picturesque pageantry by which they are accompanied.

The Muled-el-Husaneyn, or birthday of Hassan and Huseyn, sons of the Prophet, is one of the most interesting, at any rate in Cairo. On this occasion all the bazaars are illuminated and decorated, and the shops tastefully arranged for the reception and entertainment of guests. It was the custom of the Khedive, as well as holy sheykhs, to pass through the bazaars on their way to or from the Mosque el-Husaneyn, and they would partake of refreshments *en route*. A like courtesy is always extended to the passer-by or curious visitor, who will be invited to sit and rest, and watch the picturesque scene while enjoying the excellent beverages and sweetmeats so cordially presented.

Probably the most important of these Moslem feasts

is the Muled-en-Nebee, or birthday of the Prophet. This always takes place in some open space outside the town, and during the nine days of its continuance has all the character of a large country fair, in which amusements and religious functions are curiously intermingled. Of the latter, many of the most curious have one by one been abandoned. Thus the "dôseh" has long been prohibited. Formerly this function was the most important of all, when the Sheykh of the Saadiyeh Darwishes would ride on horseback over a long line of devotees lying prostrate on the ground. I have myself seen fanatics eat live scorpions, glowing charcoal, and even chew up and swallow glass lamp-funnels; while many others would cut themselves with knives, etc., in a most sickening manner.

These are now things of the past. There was one observance, however, which I am sorry to see abandoned, as it was both dramatic and impressive. I last witnessed it in a long street close to the Husaneyn Mosque. I forget which festival it was, but for many hundred yards the street was lined by two rows of men, squatting on their haunches and facing each other, and crying in unison "Allah! Allah!" With each cry they would bend forward and touch the ground with their foreheads, the first syllable of the name being said while upright, and the second as the "salaam" was made. The effect of this combined movement and chant, performed in absolute unison and with perfect regularity, was most striking. Gradually, as the rapidity of the motion was increased, many performers would fall

exhausted and insensible, only to be pulled out by the leg by one or other of the excited crowd behind them, who would take their place and continue the performance as before.

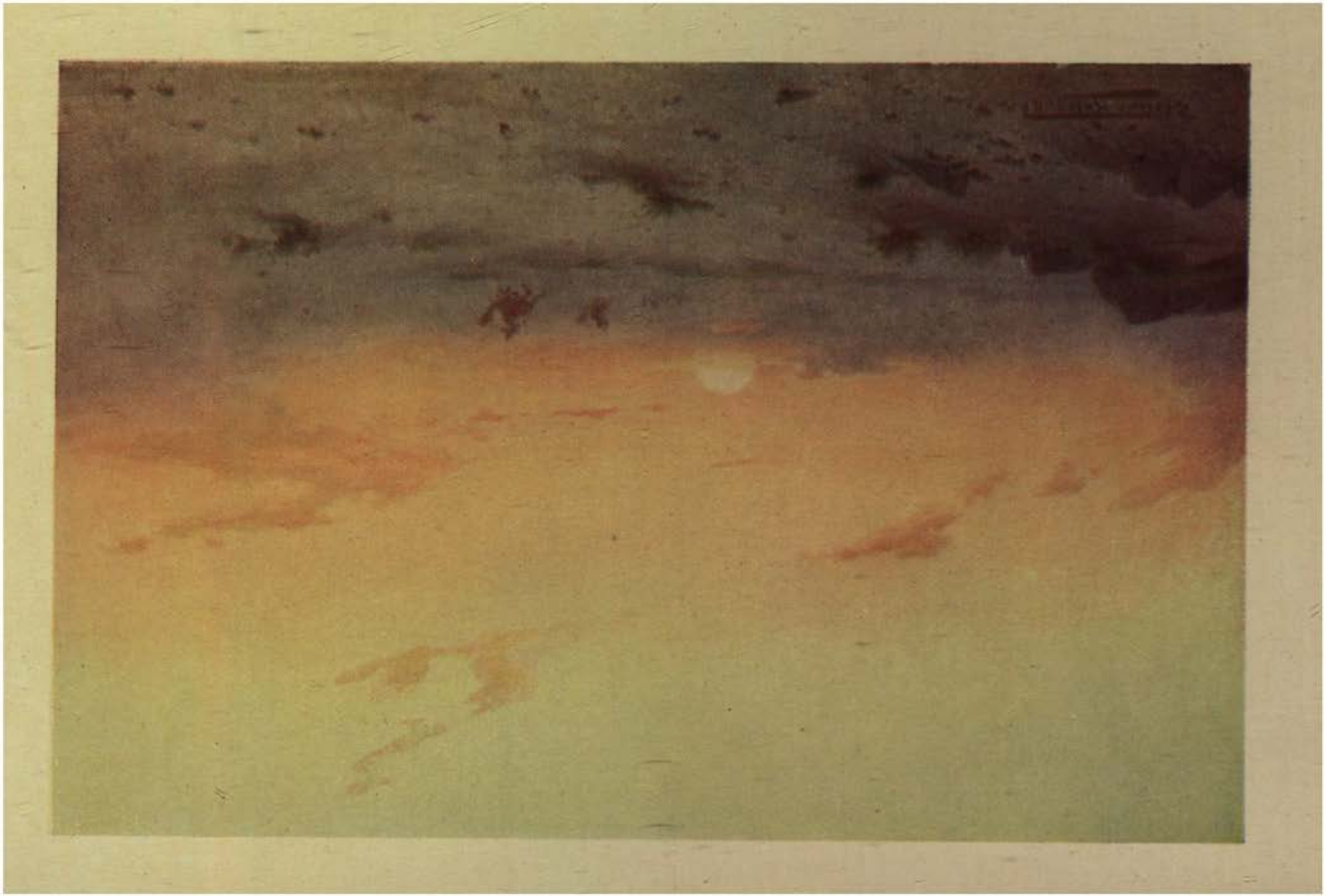
To-day, even the performance of the Howling Darwishes in old Cairo, who provided such a regular Friday's amusement for visitors, has been prohibited by order of the Khedive, though their "Zikr" may still be witnessed in conjunction with other festivals.

Probably one of the most interesting of these events is that last "fantasia" which ends Ramadan. This takes place at night, in the Citadel Mosque of Mohammed Ali, when, after the Khedive has performed his devotions, the mosque is thrown open to all who come. The huge interior is brilliantly illuminated by innumerable lamps hanging from the roof and dome, which can hardly be seen through the smoke of incense. The floor is richly carpeted, and, with the varied costume of the dense mass of people attending the performance, combines a feast of colour and light, as well as a curious study of physiognomies which alternately express faith, incredulity, or amusement.

All over its large floor-space are gathered little groups of the devout, chanting to the accompaniment of ood, kemengeh, or tabla. Interest mainly centres in the large ring near the "kibleh," where fifty or more Howling Darwishes perform. In this case they are standing, and with each cry of "Allah!" bend almost double from the waist, till their long locks nearly touch the ground as they "salaam." This

A ZIKR

APPROACHING STORM



party is accompanied by several young men who play upon large tambourines in unison. Their playing has a quaint effect, as, by striking the skin or rim, the quality of the sound is changed; and by alternating the fingers, or flat of the hand, other variations are effected. The effect is something like this: "Tm-Tum-Bzz-Tm-Tum-Bzz," but in a full rich tone which is very harmonious when many players are engaged. Meanwhile the "Howlers" rest occasionally from their exertions, but on each occasion the performance is renewed at a slight acceleration of the *tempo*. So, by slow degrees, enthusiasm is worked up, and the pace increased until there is no time in which to pronounce the whole word, which now is only "-'lah, -'lah." Men fall insensible and are dragged away, the music meanwhile becoming quicker and quicker, until the motion of the Darwishes is so rapid as to prohibit speech, and all the sound emitted is a suffocated "Ha."

Now all present in the mosque gather to witness the final *presto*. The performers, barely conscious, make one last wild effort, and accelerate their motion in a frenzy of delirium, while the tambourines are struck so rapidly as to produce one almost continuous note of immense volume and richness. This glorious tone is gathered in the vaulted dome above, and, echoing and re-echoing, comes back upon you in such a splendid combination of harmonics as forms the grandest and most stupendous note of music it has ever been my lot to hear. Suddenly the "Zikr" ceases, and the by-standers seek to restore to consciousness and sanity the

delirious devotees, who drop insensible on the ground, or mechanically continue their motion unconscious that the act is over!

Space will not permit of my attempting to describe all the festivals of the Mohammedan faith, the Muled-es-Saleh, or the picturesque "Seyideh Zeynab," which most tourists see; but I cannot leave this subject without referring to the procession of the "Mahmal" or Holy Carpet, which is the most important of those which occur during the time visitors are usually in the country.

Always associated with the Mecca pilgrimage, the origin of the ceremony would appear to be as follows. In the year of the flight 670 (A.D. 1272) the Sultan Ez Zahir Beybars performed the pilgrimage to Mecca in state, the journey being made on camel-back, and beneath the shelter of the "Mahmal" or canopy used as a protection from the sun; and succeeding Sultans, Khalifs, and Khedives followed the same practice until comparatively recently. The Khedives of Egypt have now ceased to make the pilgrimage, but send the "Mahmal" as an emblem of royalty, in which is placed the "Kisweh," or Holy Carpet, made each year as a covering for the Kaaba, or tomb, of the Prophet in Mecca. On the arrival of the new one, the old carpet is returned to Cairo with the pilgrims, and is then cut up into small pieces which are afterwards sold as relics, the proceeds being applied to the Moslem charities.

The "Kisweh" is made in Cairo at great expense, and consists of eight pieces of black cloth made of silk

RETURN OF THE MAHMAL

R. Talbot Kelly 1902

and cotton mixed, and richly adorned with inscriptions in gold thread.

The ceremony is divided into two functions. The first consists of the reception by the Khedive of the portions of the "Kisweh," which are then carried through the streets to the Husaneyn Mosque, where they are stitched together. A month later it is again blessed by the Khedive, when, enclosed in the "Mahmal," it is sent to Mecca with the pilgrims.

This reception and despatch of the "Mahmal" is one of the most picturesque of their many festivals, and its procession through the narrow streets, escorted by soldiers, and amid the enthusiasm of the Moslem crowd, is very striking; as also is its return with the old carpet, when, surrounded by its following of ragged and dirty, but pre-eminently blessed, "hadjis," it is met, away in the desert, by the proud and gratified relatives of the pilgrims.

Everything in connection with their religion has a picture value. The mosques themselves with their attendant worshippers, who conform to fixed rules as to positions, etc., and the various incidents of their muleds, give the artist great scope. It is necessary, however, that the painter should study and understand his subject if he would avoid anachronisms. A picture by an eminent foreign painter occurs to me, in which is depicted an Arab in the act of prayer, and carrying in his belt an armoury of pistols, knives, and swords. Beautiful as the painting is, it must be an irritation to the Orientalist; for the teaching of the Korān is distinct, and commands

that before engaging in prayer the Moslem must remove any weapons he may be bearing and place them on the ground pointing towards Mecca, just in front of the spot which his head will touch in the "salaam." This is one instance in many where splendid work is marred by palpable inaccuracies for which there can be little excuse. Information on such subjects may easily be obtained, and I cannot help thinking that, beyond all else, the artist should be *truthful* in his work.

PRAYER IN THE DESERT

CHAPTER XIV

CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE, AND SOME PROBLEMS

THOUGH primarily traversing Egypt in search of the pictorial, it would be impossible that any one should spend any lengthened time in the country without forming some opinion as to the moral and material condition of the people.

When I first visited Egypt in 1883, the people were still suffering from the effects of generations of tyranny and oppression, and had hardly begun to realise that the long period of torture, forced labour, and iniquitous taxation which had paralysed their efforts, and induced a feeling of hopeless resignation among them, had passed away, to give place to a new *régime* in which their industry would directly benefit themselves, and the fruit of toil might be anticipated without fear of official robbery.

Under the old *régime* corruption was the rule, while extortion and frightful injustice had ground the life out of the people. Canals were built by their own forced labour, only to enrich the Pasha by bringing water to his land, and for which they themselves had to pay an exorbitant tax. What was the use of working, when

every increase of wealth only served as an additional incentive to the rapacious official, whose demands only ceased when the limit of possible extortion was reached? Nor was it wise to lodge complaints or waste time in petitions. Judges were seduced by the bribes of the wealthy, and justice was hardly to be found. Conscription, which pressed unfairly upon the agriculturalists, drained the country of its labourers, who resorted to all kinds of self-mutilation in order to escape what meant to them eternal slavery or death. Their state was altogether pitiable, and one which seemed to give no promise of redress. Whatever the people have thought, or do think, upon the subject, Arabi's rebellion has indeed proved a blessing in disguise, in bringing about our occupation of the country and the institution of a government both sympathetic and impartial. Confronted by religious differences and international jealousies, and weighted by the apathy of a people out of whom the germ of hope seemed crushed, it was a difficult problem with which the Government had to grapple. But, with infinite patience, keeping steadily in view the great principles of reform and ignoring the petty annoyances and persistent antagonism of a section of the official class, a very few years sufficed to bring about a state of things which could hardly have been anticipated by the most sanguine.

Forced labour is a thing of the past, while the abolition of the pashalik system of government has resulted in a largely reduced and equally applied taxation, which, while relieving the people of an almost

A NILE VILLAGE

R. Talbot Kelly. 1895.

insupportable burden, has found the treasury considerably enriched. Public works of the first importance have been carried on, not by forced labour, but at fair wages; rights of property or persons are respected, and the laws wisely and impartially administered.

But while in many ways the material prosperity of the people has increased, the moral influence of an honest and enlightened administration is no less marked. The strenuous effort to abolish every abuse, equal justice for rich and poor, a scrupulous regard for religious and racial customs, and the evident sincerity and sympathy of the dominant power, have given to the people a new sense of security, and have created in them the desire to help themselves.

Already richer than ever in their history, every one seems to be striving after independence. Little hoards of savings are dug up from their hiding-places for investment, and there is a keen demand for land. Large acreages of reclaimed land have been bought in this way, thus adding to the productiveness of the country, as well as restoring to circulation large sums of money previously withdrawn.

So far, England has well fulfilled her trust, and, though some appointments which have recently been made have provoked criticism, Egypt is probably the best administered country in the world to-day, where, free from the obligations of party politics, the best man available is set to carry out a given work; and it must be acknowledged that he nearly always does it well.

It seems to me, however, that the position is not without its dangers. Of late years irrigation has been largely developed, and, in addition to reclaiming land that was formerly waste, has added considerably to the value of that already under cultivation. The small investor, hitherto perhaps simply a farm-labourer, will naturally, when possible, buy the relatively cheap *new lands*, which offer to him the greatest promise of return, and thus withdraw a certain amount of labour from land on which more regular and continuous irrigation renders increased rather than diminished labour necessary. As I have said before, the native is the best farmer for Egypt, and, so far, his place as an agriculturalist has never been satisfactorily filled by another.

The completion of the New Nile Dams at Assuan, Assiūt, etc., must soon bring this question prominently forward; and, so far as I can see, it resolves itself into a question of *population*. Increased acreage and fertility will shortly overtake the supply of available labour, a shortage which the normal increase in population is totally inadequate to supply; and though no doubt the prosperous condition of the country will induce a large number of immigrants to settle, this will hardly of itself solve the problem.

The yearly increase in purely *native* population is infinitesimal, due in large measure to the excessive rate of infant mortality, which I am told reaches the appalling figure of 90 per cent!

This extraordinary scale of mortality is no doubt

partly due to insanitary conditions of life, but mainly to the lamentable carelessness and ignorance of the mothers. Infants would seem to enjoy none of that care and attention at birth usual among other races, and none but the most robust stand much chance of surviving the early days of their existence. I have personally met with one case, and believe it is not at all infrequent, where the child has been born as its mother was working in the fields, and, simply wrapped in a handkerchief, has been placed under the shade of some bush while the mother continued her work. Presently the woman returned to find the sun beating upon the baby, already dead from exposure and neglect. "This is the will of God," she will say; and, though doubtless grieved for the loss of her little one, she is all unconscious of culpable neglect on her own part!

Indeed, I cannot help feeling that the solution of the whole question lies in the education of the women, whose position in Egypt is at present most unsatisfactory. Their religious inequality with their husbands places them on an altogether lower level, fatal to their self-respect, and militating against their proper influence over their children, which we value so highly.

Their *legal* position as wives also is most insecure. Divorce may be pronounced by the husband arbitrarily and without appeal; and though the wife has no claim upon her lord, he can at any time command her return. A treble divorce, however, pronounced at different periods, or by the words, "Thou art trebly divorced," spoken before witnesses, frees the woman entirely, and it

is only by first marrying some one else that she and her original spouse can make up their quarrel and renew conjugal relations! As a matter of fact, a woman on her marriage becomes little else than a "chattel," to be enjoyed or removed at will, and whose duties consist solely in ministering to the wants of her husband or attending to his children. One cannot therefore hope for much improvement in a race whose mothers, usually married far too young, are raised but little above the beasts, and possess neither the ability nor the inclination to properly train their offspring.

Under all the circumstances it is not surprising that the Egyptian girl does not invariably regard marriage as the most-to-be-desired aim in life. Some years ago, an old servant asked for leave of absence so that he might return to his village in order to marry his daughter to a neighbouring farmer. All the settlements were satisfactory, and old Ali was well satisfied with his daughter's prospects in life. Two days later he surprised me by returning to his duties, saying that his daughter was ill and the marriage postponed. It transpired afterwards that the girl, dreading the slavery of a married life, had poisoned herself rather than endure what she regarded as an unhappy fate!

It must not be supposed that these marriages are not often happy ones: no doubt they are. But whatever their result may be, there is no question as to their picturesqueness, and particularly in country places, where simplicity only serves to add to their interest. The attendant festivities last from three to ten days, accord-

A WEDDING PROCESSION AT MENSALA: THE HOME-COMING OF THE BRIDE

ing to the means of the parents of the contracting parties; but to the curious observer the culminating point is reached when, on the last evening of their festal days, the party forms into a procession called the "Zeffet-el-Arusa" and escorts the bride to her new home. The bride is mounted on a camel, but is entirely hidden from view by the "mahmal," or canopy, formed by a large shawl spread over a booth of palm-branches, which is attached to the saddle. Before her, leading the procession, are the village musicians, and following her are her women friends and kinsfolk, seated on the camels which carry her *lares and penates* and the gifts usual on such occasions. The male relatives escort the party, which is also accompanied by all the halt and the blind of the village, who always participate in the feasting and amusement provided by the bridegroom.

As regards education, the men generally are not in a much better position than the women. Few can read or write; and so much is this the case, that a written signature to a document is not considered valid unless attested, the assumption being that no one can write except the "kaitib"[1] and the signature therefore is a forgery. Instead of writing it, signatures are affixed by seal, the holder's identity having to be established before the seal can be cut and handed over.

Generally speaking, the education provided by the native schools consists simply in the teaching of certain

[1] Scribe.

portions of the Korān which are learnt by heart, and it is very doubtful if the master is capable of anything more.

One of the evils of such lack of knowledge lies in the inability of the fellahīn to read books or papers, and, being obliged to accept all extraneous information at second hand, they are peculiarly liable to be misled by false or prejudiced statements, often promulgated among them by unscrupulous intriguers.

On the other hand, the education of the youth of the great towns is now well looked after. Some years ago I was asked by the Ministry of Public Instruction to preside over a small commission appointed to consider the question and draw up a scheme of education to be adopted in the Khedivial schools. The report presented, and accepted by the Ministry, provided for a very thorough and liberal system of education through all the grades, from the primary to the most advanced classes, and one sufficient to equip a boy for any position in life. I am told that the scheme is working well, and the Government has wisely introduced into the Education Department, as masters, gentlemen of the highest education and social position, so that the youth of Cairo and the large towns are now enjoying a training equal to many public schools, and with the advantage of association with and direction by graduates of English universities.

Such an elaborate education is neither possible nor necessary in the case of the agricultural masses, but a great deal more should be done for them than has yet

been attempted. The American and English Mission Schools have done, and are doing, splendid work, and the new Gordon College at Khartūm promises to be completely successful; and, provided no attempt at proselytising is made to arouse the suspicion of the parents, such schools must result in a vast amount of good to the race.

Boys and girls should be equally educated, at any rate so far as the middle grades; while those who desire it should be enabled to advance to the highest standard possible, irrespective of sex; and in the case of the girls some tuition in domestic work and the elements of hygiene is much to be desired. Private philanthropy has done something in this direction, but of course on a scale quite out of proportion to the necessities of the case.

If only in the village schools a *complete* knowledge of their own Korān could be imparted, the beneficial result would be great. Few of the people know anything more of their sacred writings than it suits the Imam to teach them, and I feel sure that a thorough knowledge of their own religion would go far to break down that fanatical hatred of the Christian which so unfortunately exists. How many, for instance, even among the relatively enlightened, are aware of Mohammed's instruction that "after Moslems, of all persons Christians are to be revered"? I suspect that this and kindred teaching is of set purpose disregarded by the teachers, who, instead, impart to their scholars such passages only as are calculated to keep alive antagonism and hate.

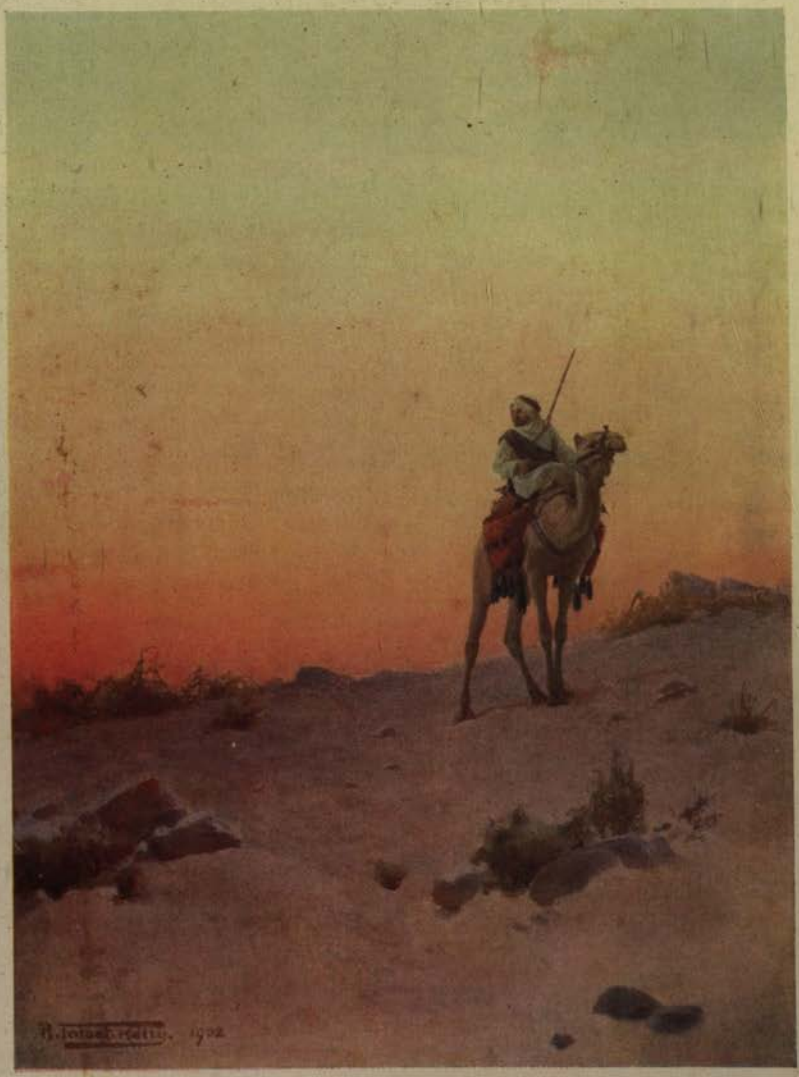
Still, things are progressing in Egypt, and among the highest classes at any rate broader views obtain. Many of the upper classes have enjoyed university education in Europe, and are more or less cosmopolitan in their sympathies, while the freedom of intercourse which now exists between the gentlemen of Egypt and their European guests cannot fail in time to break down what remains of racial and religious prejudice.

On the other hand, it is stated that crime is increasing in the country, and poisoning cases are unfortunately very frequent. In most instances I believe this particular crime is an act of vengeance by the brother upon a sister who has gone astray, the girl usually being the victim rather than her seducer; and I recently heard of one extraordinary case where two shadoof-men, brothers, walked all the way from Assuan to Suez and there killed the sister who had disgraced her family, afterwards surrendering themselves to the Mudir and stating what they had done. Of late years European labour has been more freely introduced into the country, and I cannot help thinking that this has not had a good effect upon the *morale* of the people; but apart from any consideration of this kind, is it not possible that this increase in criminal record is more apparent than real?

As I have previously suggested, an appeal to law was not always wise, and the victim of assault or robbery was often better advised in bearing his wrong in silence than in taking any legal action for redress.

Let me give an illustration. Near a village in the Sharkiyeh lived a farmer whose "fatted calf" was stolen

A DESERT SCOUT



in the night. Lodging his complaint with the local authority, the thief was eventually caught and the calf recovered. The nearest court, however, was at Mansūrah, and its date of sitting rather distant, so the intelligent "mamūr"[1] imprisoned not only the thief, but the farmer, his family, and the calf, so as to have them ready to hand when the case should be tried; and then forgot all about them! It was many years afterwards before a chance inquiry discovered the matter and secured their release. When such things were possible it was often wiser to be silent, and especially when bribery was so openly used to defeat the ends of justice.

To-day it is different, and confidence in the absolute impartiality of the law as now administered has induced the native (always rather litigious) to bring into court many trivial cases, while it stands to reason that offences of a more serious nature will not be allowed to pass unnoticed; and, in consequence, there is a swelling of the statistics of the courts.

Though thinking that, at least in part, the recorded increase in criminality may be accounted for in this way, I am afraid that there can be no question that crime is more prevalent than formerly; and until more-wide-spread education has had time to work its cure, other means must be adopted. We cannot make the people Christians, and it may not be even desirable to do so, but at any rate let us do all that is possible to keep them *good* Mohammedans. Among other prohibitions of the

[1] Police-officer.

Prophet are indulgence in opium, hashish, or tobacco, as well as intoxicants of any kind. Hashish and alcohol work more havoc among the natives than any other influence, yet every café will supply the former, and no restriction is placed upon the sale of drink, which, in Cairo and other centres, has such a demoralising effect among the Moslem population; and the institution of a liquor licence and the prohibition of opiates would be at least *one* move in the direction of diminution of crime.

More than all else, however, would be the force of example on the part of the European population, and I am glad to think that Englishmen at any rate have set such an example to the people. From highest to lowest of the Government servants, each has been actuated by a sense of responsibility beyond the reach of bribes; honesty and integrity characterise every department of the administration, while justice and good faith on the part of all have inspired in the mind of the native a feeling of confidence and respect.

In conclusion, I cannot do better than give an illustration in proof of this. A native, wishing to sell a horse whose soundness was under discussion, exhausted all the asseverations in his repertoire without convincing the doubter. Finally the bargain was clinched, as with raised hand he exclaimed, "Ana kelm wahed, ana kelm Inglisi," which may be roughly translated as:

"I speak the truth, I speak as an Englishman!"

THE END

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Hemendra Kothari

on 06 November, 2019